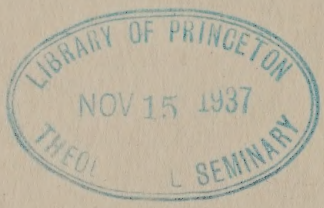
A REASONABLE FAITH

RUSSELL J. CLINCHY



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RUSSELL J. CLINCHY

WILLETT, CLARK & COMPANY
CHICAGO NEW YORK
1937

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Manufactured in The U. S. A. by The Plimpton Press
Norwood, Mass.-La Porte, Ind.

To
Evelina Evans Clinchy
whose mind and spirit
portray religion as a
pearl of great price,
and whose love
has made life
a high romance

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A REASONABLE FAITH

INTRODUCTION

THERE ARE two ways in which we may approach religion. One is the method used by the Apostle's Creed and by institutional religion generally. It begins with statements of what we believe. " I believe in God, the Father Almighty," and so on down the list. Then follows an attempt to discover the meaning of each item of belief.

Inevitably this procedure has led us into confusion. It is not that the fundamental ideas have been wrong, for we do not think that many of them are. We are confused for the same reason that a boy who had been brought up in an orphanage since babyhood would feel confused if someone came to him and said, " My boy, you must believe in a mother's love." Now the boy might be very willing to believe in a mother's love, and he might be willing to make a statement that he did. But we recognize the confusion and sense of unreality there would be in his mind until he had some experience of it. If, however, instead of asking the orphan boy to recite the statement, " I believe in a mother's love," we should enable him to have some personal experience of that love, he would by the experience acquire the understanding that would permit him to say, " Now I know there is something I want to call a mother's love and believe in as good." About that there would be no confusion and no unreality.

The second approach to religion, then, is by the method of reaching conclusions through experience and research. In

attempting to use this method we are really using the oldest way, for this was the method employed by those who first formulated our religious faith and the expression of it. They discovered some vital things about life which they had to describe in words. We have thought that by beginning with the terms they used we could arrive at the same experiences and understandings they had. But we have forgotten that words have different meanings for different people; hence for a great host of people religion is cluttered up with so many meaningless and unreal words and phrases that they have either become bewildered or have lost all interest in it. They are asked to believe in a word like " God," and when they ask what the word means they are given answers by Father Divine, Professor Machen and Dr. Fosdick. The result is the utter confusion which exists in the minds of men and women of the Christian world regarding religion, men and women who do not sit in the seats of the scorners but who, wistfully and earnestly, seek the light and strength of religious experience.

Suppose, then, we make a venture of searching life to discover what is there. That is what the plain man and woman want to find out. Then, when we have made our discoveries, we can attempt to give them such names as for us best express their meaning, recognizing that words can only imperfectly symbolize the apprehensions of the mind or the intuitions of the heart. Most of us cannot continue to believe in a religion which life and experience do not validate. But we do want to accept and use a religion which has a rational and valid foundation.

Our approach to religion will be made by way of life itself and not by statements which must then be explained and

proved. We shall look at the universe and life and see what we discover their nature, content and motivation to be, and then if we wish to make any definitions or statements we can use any vocabulary we desire. We are not interested, primarily, in the vocabulary, either old or new. We are interested in two things — first in discovering what the universe and life have to tell us, and then in ascertaining the ways in which we may best develop a living and sustaining relationship to whatever reality we find.

As a minister, I have found that the plain men and women of the church are asking for such a presentation in language that is clear, based on experiences that they understand. I have endeavored to make full and free use of that vast material which has been stored up for every student of Christian experience by the older theologians, and also by that most interesting and provocative group of the new generation, such as Van Dusen, Horton, Calhoun and Bennett. They will be among the first to sense that the book is not a theological treatise for students, but is designed definitely for the laymen and laywomen of the churches, phrased in the vocabulary of daily experience and living. It is my deep conviction that there is an eager and wistful desire for real religious knowledge and experience on the part of countless men and women in the modern world who have thought that they had to give up religion because the older forms were no longer tenable. This book is an attempt to show them that they not only may be religious, but are religious.

I owe a very great debt of gratitude to Miss Katharine F. Lenroot, who spent long hours in reading the manuscript and gave not only invaluable counsel on the general arrangement of the parts and chapters, but also many helpful suggestions

from the richness of her own personal experience of religion.

Milwaukee-Downer College extended to me the privilege of presenting to its students some of the material contained in the book, and Dr. Louise S. Eby, of that faculty, helped greatly in discussions of the content.

I would express also my grateful appreciation of the devotion and response of the people of the Mount Pleasant Congregational Church, who have been my comrades and friends for six years. They have desired that their minister make this kind of search for truth; they have been eager to listen to all which has seemed to him to be truth; they have given him and his wife the gift of an enduring friendship whose roots are in the unspeakably rich associations which make life a high inspiration and a constant joy. No minister can ask more of life than such an adventure with such friends.

RUSSELL J. CLINCHY

The Minister's Study
Washington, D. C.
26 December, 1936

PART ONE

WHAT THE UNIVERSE AND LIFE HAVE TO TELL US

ONE

THE ORDER OF THINGS

WHEN I consider Thy heavens . . . the moon and the stars, . . ." sang the psalmist. Thus did man's curiosity lead him first to a consideration of the world about him, and through this consideration he made some discoveries upon which he built a faith. He decided that the place to begin the search for truth was in the ultimate realities of the universe itself. That is the kind of adventure upon which we may now set out.

When we do this we are at once confronted with the vastness of the space which surrounds the little planet upon which we find ourselves. This is a disconcerting fact to most of us. When we survey that space and compare it with our size, we shrink into such insignificance that it is hard for us to believe that we amount to anything, or that there can be any control of it which has any meaning for us. A sense of loneliness and helplessness comes over us. It is not so much that we do not want to believe in a God who knows what it is

all about, but that it seems impossible to do so. We understand with new feeling those lines:

I remember, I remember
The fir trees, dark and high,
It seemed to me their giant tops
Were just against the sky.
And now that I am older
To me it's little joy,
To know I'm farther off from God
Than when I was a boy.

When the heavens were supposed to be only four thousand miles above the earth, and this earth was conceived to be the center of everything, with the sun, moon and stars existing for its benefit, it was not difficult to believe that there was a God in those heavens who had made and controlled it all. We did not do away with such a God. He disappeared into the mists as our knowledge pushed the limits of the universe farther and farther out into incomprehensible space. We did not deny God, we just lost sight of him.

But that is the kind of universe we must consider, and all our thought and considerations must be based upon the modern conception of the universe, just as the ancient considerations were based upon the ancient conceptions.

I

We who have our minds centered upon things here on earth have difficulty in comprehending the true nature of the universe. The highest speed that we have been able to attain on this planet is about three hundred miles an hour in an air-

plane. But the astronomer has to use an entirely different measure of speed to describe the extent of the universe. He uses the speed of a beam of light which travels 186 thousand miles a second, 11 million miles a minute, and 660 million miles an hour. But that is too short a measure, so he uses a light year, the distance a beam of light travels in a year, or 6 trillion miles. And if we travel for 50 thousand of those light years, we shall have reached only the limit of the great system of stars known as our galaxy, and there are at least four more galaxies beyond ours.

In our galaxy the sun which provides our earth with light and heat is an insignificant glowing speck. In it there are about one hundred billion stars, and even from one of the closest, Arcturus, it takes a beam of light, rushing 186 thousand miles a second, forty years to reach this planet. But beyond our galaxy with its billions of stars are others larger than our own. The nearest of these are the Magellanic Clouds, which are about one million light years away. It is now even possible to photograph beams of light which began traveling from the recesses of this universe one hundred million years ago.

But the universe is not only vast, it is made up of forms which are infinitesimal. If our minds are unable to comprehend the vastness of the distances, they also cannot comprehend how small the particles of the universe are. We have discovered that all matter is made up of minute particles which we call atoms, filled with invisible electric energy. But these atoms are themselves composed of electrons and protons and several other forms.

Here, then, we have a universe, made up of invisible electric atoms, developing into planets and stars which range a

course greater in extent than human mathematics can measure. Is there any significance to all this that impresses itself upon us as we consider it?

Yes, there is. It is that all of this amazing arrangement is orderly and is controlled by law. Nothing happens by chance, and nothing occurs which cannot be accounted for. There are, for instance, ninety-two chemical elements. They are nearly all discovered, but the sequences and relationship of their properties are so orderly that it was possible for chemists to predict the existence of many of them even before they were discovered. The same is true about the journey of the stars. They do not move with the haphazard motion of uncontrolled traffic, with innumerable collisions, but hurl themselves through space in a planned and directed orbit. When an atom is exploded, it always explodes into the same parts. When a planet moves, it is along a directed road, and no accidents ever occur on the celestial highway. Neither can an atom contain different elements today from those it contained yesterday.

When we consider the universe, we find an arrangement too majestic and too great for our minds to imagine, composed of atoms too small for us to comprehend, and yet every particle of it moves according to an orderly plan which can be completely trusted. That consideration brings us to a realization that in the universe there is perfect order. *That seems to be purpose.*

II

When we consider further, we discover not only that the universe is orderly, but that it runs on a time schedule. Many others had the same exciting experience I had one cold win-

ter morning several years ago in the hills of Connecticut. The newspapers had told us that at 9:31 on a certain morning the moon would pass in front of the sun. On that morning the sun was shining brightly out of a clear blue sky and the white snow upon the ground gave a brilliant light to the whole landscape. The people of the little village gathered at every open spot, all with pieces of smoked glass in their hands. An outsider passing by would have thought they were crazy, for there was no sign of anything but a brilliant sun.

People held their watches in their hands while a queer light began to fall upon the landscape. Twilight had begun to arrive in the morning. Then at the predicted moment those who looked at the sun through their smoked glasses saw the rim of the moon touch the border of the sun's light as it started to pass between the earth and the sun. In a few minutes night had fallen, and looking up into the heavens one could see the stars. Slowly the light returned as the moon passed on and uncovered the sun again.

The astounding fact was not that the sun and the moon and the earth could be so arranged that for a few brief moments the moon would blot out the sun, but that there is a timetable of the universe so exact that the scientists could say later that their calculation as to the moment of that eclipse was only one-fifth of a second away. It had been predicted years before that in that certain section of New England a total eclipse of the sun would be seen at exactly 9:31 on that January morning. The planets and stars of the universe kept moving in their courses, every one of them on an exact time schedule that never varied to the split second, and moving down the ages with such precision that at 9:31, and not at 9:32, the rim

of the moon began to shut off the light of the sun. That is the kind of schedule upon which the universe is constructed.

All of us who know a little about science know many other things concerning the timetable of the universe. Our daily newspapers tell us the exact moments of sunrise and sunset, and the exact moment when the tide ceases to come in and turns to go out. The sunrise and the turn of the tide are on infallible time schedules — not like the timetables of our railroads which report trains due at certain moments, but which we cannot rely upon with any certainty. There is no possibility that the sunrise or the tides will be reported late. Not only can we test the time schedule of the universe by our clocks, but we can test our clocks by the timetable of the universe.

We discover that we are dealing, then, not alone with a mass of matter, chemicals, light and heat, but with that matter so minutely organized that it moves with absolute precision according to an exact time schedule. Does it seem probable that at some very early date a mass of rock and water and gas was thrown up into the air by some gargantuan power, and that when all these materials came down they were formed into a system that proceeded to run on a schedule that we can calculate in split seconds? If that be true, it ought to be possible for us to throw a handful of scrap iron up into the air and expect to see it fall down again into our hands in the shape of a watch. But there is one thing we do know for certain, and that is that such things do not happen. Matter which is thrown up into the air by our hands, or by the might of some universal power, may collide with something while it is in the air and take on another form, but it does not take on a schedule of time.

Yet the universe is so clearly and distinctly controlled by time that we are able not only to tell the exact moment when the tide will turn upon the beach, but to announce the moment when a new star will come into our sight. There are some who want us to believe that this great plan came about through a mixing of gas and matter millions of years ago; that through this matter's being thrown together by gaseous explosions, and through the repercussions of terrific collisions, the universe settled itself into the form in which we now perceive it to be. They tell us that we must remember that we are still in the grip of such chance and accident, that suddenly some day another star or planet may bump into us and smash us into gas and stone again, and that all that will be left will be matter, gas and more explosions. Now that is a hypothesis which anyone has the right to make, but it simply is not possible, to what we mean by " disciplined intellects," to say that a universe which has had its gas and chemicals arranged so that they work on a clock system came into that system through a series of collisions and explosions and is likely to break up in the same way.

Disciplined minds know that time is a product of mind, and any expression of that time must be an expression of mind and thought. No matter what else is accident, seconds and minutes and hours are not accidents of nature. The precision of mathematics demands a mind to understand it, and therefore it demands a mind to bring it into being. In the universe there is a system of time. That seems to be the expression of mind.

III

The other discovery we make when we look at the universe is that its laws work *for* man instead of against him. At first glance this sounds anything but true. Gravity is a law of nature, and if we fall off a cliff we are killed through the result of the law of gravity. An earthquake is the result of a law of nature, and if we are standing on the street and an earthquake occurs beneath us, we are crushed to death by falling buildings. Fire is the result of a law of nature, and it can destroy all that we possess, and ourselves as well. Disease is the result of laws of nature, and we know how quickly that can do away with us. Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, heat and cold are all phenomena of laws of nature, and they have taken by the millions their toll of human life. It seems, then, as though the laws of the universe have no concern for the welfare of man at all and are simply oblivious of him, intent only upon going their own way, destroying what impedes them or chances to stand in their course.

But let us consider the universe with clarity and true understanding. The law of gravity enables us to live upon this earth, to walk upon the ground, to build homes which stay upon their foundations, and to carry on life with no danger of flying off into the air. It does allow us to be killed if we step off a cliff into the air, but that is because when it drops us with a thud to the ground it is engaged in the task of keeping us on the earth. Our foolishness is not its fault.

An earthquake is caused by the excess development of heat and gas, but without such occurrences in the natural world we could not live. We must have the expansive power of both heat and gas. If we add steam, we see how absolutely

necessary it is for us that there should be the development of heat, the power of gases, and the turning of water into the power of steam. These are the powers by which we heat and light our homes, drive our engines and provide the basic foundations of life.

These laws are working for us night and day. It is true that the locomotive boiler may explode, or the earth beneath our feet erupt, but even then these laws are acting in ways which can make for our good if only we have intelligence enough to use them.

Fire, tornadoes, floods, all these that seem so terrifying and ruthless, are results of laws of nature which fundamentally preserve and protect life if we will but use them with intelligence and understanding. Especially is this true of the working of laws which result in what we call disease, laws which should be called the laws of health. Nature is not nonpartisan toward our physical bodies. Nature fights for our health with the same intensity with which a mother fights for the life of her child. If we cut our flesh, nature rushes to our rescue and throws into the fight every resource that we have stored up for her to use. It is true that as a meal cannot be served in the dining room when there are no reserves in the kitchen, so nature can use only the resources of the body which we have stored up. But nature uses these to the utmost and fights with ferocity on our side. She not only uses our resources, but she provides resources, and those who search for them will discover new ways in which nature can help us. We need food, and the right food is here. We need pure water, and water may be found and made pure to drink. We need powers of resistance in our bodies, and nature literally cries out to us to use her resources to endow

our bodies with vitamins, blood material, and the strength through exercise which will enable us to resist all disease. The stars in their courses fight with us in the efforts of nature to be on the side of our health.

That is what the best of modern scientific research is telling us. Dr. Arthur H. Compton has asked us to believe that the laws of the universe may be considered friendly. In his recent book, *The Freedom of Man,* he writes:

> Our study of the laws of nature emphasizes the fact that these laws are immutable; but when we begin to understand them, we are able to turn them to our service. As was perhaps first clearly seen by Pythagoras, if we learn these laws and live in accord with nature's rules, we and our fellow men have a fuller and happier life.

Then he adds:

> The result has been that when we learn nature's laws and school ourselves to obey them, we can turn them to our advantage. That is, these laws are friendly to a well adapted organism. Is nature friendly to us? Assuredly, if we will learn her laws and adapt our lives accordingly. If we do not, she may become our merciless enemy. Such is the stern yet kindly dictum which science has to offer.*

If that interpretation be correct — that the powers of nature work for our good — then there must be an awareness of us as beings for whom these powers were made friendly, and

* *The Freedom of Man* by Arthur H. Compton (Yale University Press), pp. 110–13.

therefore a consideration and appreciation of us in the plan of the universe.

IV

These discoveries are the foundation of liberal religion. Such religion is not wishful thinking; it is not the result of the fear of the unknown; it is not an opiate to calm our frenzy when we have been confronted with some awful reality; it is not credulity resting simply upon dogmatic statement. Such a religion is founded upon far greater imperatives than these. It is founded upon realities which are seen to be at the very center of things. It does not hide in fear before reality. It is willing to search with a telescope the heavens and with a microscope the inner recesses of matter to find the truth, confident that the truth will set us free.

Religion, therefore, recognizes these fundamental realities of the universe — that the universe is orderly, and so has purpose; that in it is a system of time, and so it contains mind; that its laws work for human life rather than against it, and so there is in the universe understanding of who and what human beings are.

Religion does not demand that we give a certain name to the source of this purpose, this mind and this understanding. If we demand that, we shall find ourselves in the midst of a dispute over the authenticity of the word we have used rather than in possession of some conception of the source. One of the ancient religious peoples, the Hebrews, refused to give the source a name which could be uttered in speech because it was so unspeakably great and holy. Yet all of us recognize that we must form some syllable with our lips, inadequate though it may be, so that we may transmit in speech some-

thing of the awe, the thrill and the insight which we have received.

Religion speaks a name only that we may express, as adequately as we possibly can, the power and the glory that we have discovered. What we are trying to say is that we have looked at the universe unafraid, and, looking, have found there a purpose, a mind and a friendly awareness of us. That is why, then, in every generation, men who have sought for truth as blind men seek for light have cried out with joy: "The heavens declare the glory — of God!"

TWO

THE SOURCE OF HUMAN PERSONALITY

When we survey the order of things, we seem to come to the logical conclusion that there exist a purpose, a mind and an awareness which make us believe that there is a God who made the universe and who sustains it. Something is at work in the world in an orderly manner.

But we want to know more than that. Professor Kirtley Mather has pointed out that man's real quest is to know the character of this administration of the universe which his mind has told him is present. The important question we face is what kind of God it is that rules the world. The question which the atheist raises is not any longer a serious problem either in science or religion. In the face of the statements of Eddington and Jeans regarding the ultimate Reality that shaped things and is ordering them, the assumption of the atheist that there is no God is at least questionable. Our deepest question is whether this Creator has character and spirit which have meaning for us. To find an answer to this question, let us begin with the reality around us and see to what the investigation leads us.

I

There seems to be something in the world that we want to call "human personality." There is no dispute about it, any more than there is dispute about the reality of the physical

body of the man who expresses that personality. We know that there are men and women with physical bodies in the world and that they possess an intangible something to which we have given the name, " personality." Let us search for the characteristics of that something. Of what is it composed?

During the war there was a young master mariner in the merchant marine who was navigating transports through the war zone. He was twenty-two years old, a powerfully built, healthy man, over six feet in height — until he began to have rheumatic pains and actually to shrink in size. He grew weaker and his physical structure seemed to change entirely. A bone disease attacked him, and he was in constant pain. The physicians diagnosed his ailment in many different ways, but this was a disease that medical science could not understand.*

The young captain immediately put himself into the hands of physicians for examination, letting the doctors treat him, operate on him and make tests. When they wanted to stop after four operations he threatened to leave the hospital. He fought his rare disease as he would pilot his ship through a stormy sea, and insisted that the doctors carry on their investigations because he realized he was adding to the records of medical knowledge. The doctors continued their work, making all kinds of tests which, however, seemed only to increase the pain and the symptoms. They searched through three more operations for a parathyroid tumor, but could not find one. After the seventh operation they decided that this man had stood more than a mortal could bear, but the young captain insisted that they go on. Three more operations were

* *The Advance of Science,* edited by Watson Davis (Doubleday, Doran & Co.), p. 255.

performed and they discovered a tumor in the chest, where none had ever been found before.

It was too late to save the gallant captain. He lost the last fight at the age of thirty-six. But the adventure he made during those years when he insisted that his body be used as an altar in the search for truth has revolutionized scientific understanding of the importance of the thyroid glands. The body which was torn by disease, and then at the insistence of its owner cut into again and again by the surgeon's knife, has gone, but the something which controlled and directed it will save the lives of uncounted millions in the years to come.

II

Today we know everything about the physical and chemical compounds that went to make up that man. We know about the chemical formation of the bones, the gland tissue, the blood, and all the other parts of the body. We see their sources in the chemical resources of the earth. They are apparent to us and can be appropriated at any time we want them. Yet, after all, the one important fact about the young captain was not his possession of a body which could go through all those chemical changes, but the possession of something which could demand that his body be used for experimentation which might not save him, but which might save others. We call that "human personality," and we discover in a case like this that it has the quality of sacrifice.

The human personality possesses other qualities of which we are aware. The human spirit can love; that is, it can regard others with affection. There is not one of us who does not owe most of what he is to the love and affection that someone, or many, gave to him as he passed through life.

We all know that one of the great truths of life is that if we were hanged on the highest hill, someone's love would follow us in this darkest moment of life. This human spirit of ours can love, deeply and powerfully, and we know it as truly as we know the reality of vitamin D. When we see David Livingstone bury the body of his wife under a tree on a far-off African hill, saying, "Oh Mary, my Mary, how often we longed for our quiet Highland home, and now this is the end" — and then go on across Africa to keep on helping people, we see the presence of love in the spirit of man — love for all humanity as well as love for our nearest and dearest. But what is its source?

We can also discover within the human personality the spirit of fellowship. Science calls it the gregarious instinct, but fellowship is a far deeper experience than that expressed by the bald term, "gregariousness." It is more than the desire of humans to draw together in communities. Many of us remember that adventure of John Frederic Oberlin of which Marshall Dawson has written. Oberlin, as the Protestant pastor of a French village church, one morning rescued a Jewish peddler from a threatening mob. Taking him home, the minister placed him at the table with the rest of the family. That evening the Catholic priest came in for a chat, and the three of them — the Protestant minister, the Catholic priest and the Jewish peddler — sat down before the fire. The mood of the evening was mellow and the priest turned to the minister and said, "How I wish, my friend, that you and I were of the same religion!" The minister was silent a moment, and then, putting one arm around the Catholic and the other around the Jew, he said, "Those who love are of the same religion." In our world men can extend the hand of

fellowship, one to another, and that attribute is a possession of human personality. But where did it come from?

There is one more possession, and that is goodness. That does not have to be described, for we instinctively know that a man or woman can be good. But goodness does not mean the ability to follow a code or a set of rules, although we have often confused such ability with goodness. The Pharisees in the time of Jesus followed the accepted codes with such minute precision that one could have found no single point at which they disobeyed the law, and yet Jesus called them "whited sepulchers." That is not what we mean by goodness, even though that is often what passes for goodness in the moral coinage of our times. Man possesses an attribute far higher and stronger than that, the ability to live according to the dictates of the noblest order of things. When we see such living we call it "good." We see it best in a life like that of Jesus — in his helpfulness to those in need; in his joy over the expression of truth; in his actions which correspond with real values; in his understanding spirit. There is no dispute over his actions, for they are, without any discussion, what we want to call "good." In the personality of man we find the attribute of goodness.

III

In human personality, therefore, we find the four attitudes which we hope most of all we may find in the nature of the universe: love, sacrifice, fellowship and goodness. The only real fear we have is the fear that we have been placed in a world which has no understanding of such things and can treat us only as though such ways of life did not exist. Take those attributes out of the universe and life becomes a fright-

ful nightmare, for if such a blind universe takes hold of us it must clutch us as a relentless machine pulls something into its revolving wheels, and not as a friend touches us, with sympathy and understanding. Yet here is the amazing truth, that human personality possesses these great attributes of life and that noble persons who guide their lives by them are in this universe. What we must find out, therefore, is whether a sympathetic spirit is at the center of the universe, or whether we have achieved a certain spirit of life which is only transient and not inherent in the universe. Does human life possess these rich powers because the nature of things corresponds with them?

We ask ourselves, then, where these deep and good qualities of life came from. Is it possible to admit that we possess them in human life and at the same time claim that there is nothing in the universe which corresponds to them? Certainly we have learned enough about the laws of the universe to know that nothing in our world can be completely isolated. Our bodies do not contain chemicals which are not to be found in the universe. There are no laws of health which we do not find ingrained in the texture of life in the universe. We know that no matter how intelligent we are we cannot think of anything or shape anything unless we deal with thoughts and plans and materials which correspond with those which constitute the universe. We cannot create the radio or discover insulin unless we deal with powers which the sources of the universe provide.

Then surely we are simply using reason and understanding through experience when we claim that, as a man who possesses electric light is using the electric forms of energy in the world, so a man who possesses the spiritual aspects of human

personality has hold of something that has provided such aspects because it is present in the very nature of things. Knowing the laws of the universe as we do, we know also that it is utterly impossible for us to use something that came from nothing. Things do not happen that way. Then here is where hope and optimism can find perfect security in the recognition that we are dealing not only with sacrifice, love, fellowship and goodness in the nature of man, but with these qualities in a universe which is their source.

We have found the Creator who is so majestic that we want to give him the name of God. Now we can go further and say that as the order of things in this amazing universe predicates a Creator-God, so the realization of the qualities in the personality of man renders inevitable the belief that the source of such qualities is in the same God. Dr. Van Dusen has phrased such a belief for us:

> The imperturbable splendor and grandeur of the universe; the imperious command of the highest; the beauty of nature without and that far more mysterious whisper of beauty within; the glory of many human lives; the face of Jesus Christ; the tale of human history; the enveloping Presence which speaks personally to each man one by one; these and others are the varied strands woven into the fabric of a rich and worthy certainty.*

IV

Here, then, is where we can place our faith in the nature of the universe and in the nature of God — not in ways of wishful thinking, but in realities of life which must emanate from

* *God in These Times* by H. P. Van Dusen (Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 78.

the very nature of things. We do not say that God ought to possess the qualities of sacrifice and love and fellowship and goodness. We say that these are all present even in the lives of men and women like ourselves, and therefore we know that they are interwoven into the very texture of all that we mean by God. And this is the only way in which the nature of God can be made apparent. There is no way of presenting the reality of God if someone does not make him real. Then, when some man sacrifices all that life means to him so that others can live; when someone loves with a power of love that redeems us; when someone reaches out in fellowship from what might be his lonely life to our lonely life; when someone is good — then man is presenting not himself, but the source of all these ways of life, which is God.

To make that belief fully intelligible and valid, we should face the alternative realistically. If it is not true that God is the source of goodness and nobility in man, then the existence of all that is beautiful and good is but the accidental and ineffectual by-product of blind atoms. If it is not true, then all that which we know as human personality is but a temporary phenomenon and is finally doomed not only to extinction but to what is worse, the pathetic frustration of all our hope that it might be permanent. But every bit of intelligence that we command tells us it *is* so. As our bodies have grown and developed out of the resources of the earth which have nourished them, so our souls have grown and developed, and no one can tell us that there was a source for the first, and no source for the second. It is reality with which we are dealing, and not supposition, and therefore we are stepping from the reality of human personality into the reality of the personality of God.

There are some who would debate that word "personality" in connection with God. One of our leading modern theologians states that God can never be a personality, for he must be beyond all personality. But, as another contemporary theologian has reminded us, God may be superpersonal without ceasing to be essentially personal. He can be thought of as being personal in the sense of being conscious, intelligent, purposive, working consciously and rationally toward an end in which the conservation of human personality and values is included. That is the kind of Personality with which the personality of Jesus had communion, and which was its source.

It may be an interesting game of philosophical quibbling to discuss whether God is personality-producing or *is* personality, but for the average man who is facing life intelligently but with the awful seriousness of practical reality, it seems little more than quibbling. Somehow he has become aware of the meaning of his own personality and of its characteristics, and his intelligence, as well as his spiritual perception, has led him to understand that God is the source and the reality of such personality in terms of sacrifice, love, goodness and fellowship. He is willing to make a venture of faith toward such a Being who is not only the Creator of all the universe but the Source of all we call life, the Being who sacrifices for us, who loves us with a love that goes with us along the road of life, who reaches out to us in fellowship and who is eternally good. It is from that Source these souls of ours have come, as Wordsworth, in haunting words of beauty, saw them coming —

The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, Who is our Home.

THREE

A GUIDE FOR SEEKERS

In this adventure in religion we have now arrived at the assurance that the universe reveals a Creator-God, and that the soul of man reveals such qualities of sacrifice, fellowship, goodness and love as to compel our belief that they must have their source in the origin of all life — in other words, in the love and goodness of God. It remains for us to seek further light upon the kind of relationship which may exist between Creator and created, the one with infinite, the other with finite capacity for love and fellowship.

For such a search, as for many lesser journeys or adventures, we need a guide. We have often experienced such need for guidance. It may have been upon a climb up a high mountain; it may have been on a journey through the woods; it may have been in an art gallery. It may have been on any of a hundred and one adventures upon which we set out to find something or to reach some destination. Most of us have discovered that though there are a few who can go alone, the majority of us need a guide. This is especially true if the journey is new and the route hazardous.

Those who have found a need for guidance have discovered that there are some very definite accomplishments which a guide must possess. There seem to be at least seven essentials which we demand of a trustworthy guide.

I

First, he must have been over the way. A man who had never been to the top of the Jungfrau could not be the one to lead us there. It is not that we can go only as far as men before us have gone; that would make of us mere camp followers. The Englishmen who sought to reach the top of Everest had never been there, but they had been over that kind of way. Other men would follow them upon that kind of journey, and go with them farther than man had ever gone before. Our guide must be one who has traveled the kind of road on which he is to guide us.

In the second place, he must know what other guides before him have tried to do, and the result of their efforts. Now there are times in life when a journey has to be made for the first time, for we all recognize that there are voyages like that of Columbus or like the journeys of those who first crossed the Rockies. But on most of our mental and spiritual journeys we know that many others have been over the roads before us, accumulating a great body of discovery and experience. They have also left milestones and charts, and no guide who follows these paths can afford to be oblivious of their findings or their experiences. Our guide must have a very full and appreciative understanding of all that former guides have tried to do and have discovered.

Third, our guide must be one who believes in the venture. It is impossible to picture as an Alpine guide one who had doubts as to whether a mountain could be climbed or as to whether it was really worth while to climb it at all. Nor is it possible to picture as a guide one who sits in a warm, comfortable cabin and dreams sentimental dreams of how won-

derful it would be to stand upon a snow-capped peak, but who dreads to leave his fireside. Yet on all sides are men who have all of these characteristics and who nevertheless seek to be our guides. They doubt that we can succeed in finding our destination. They doubt that it is really worth while to take the trouble. They have a sentimental attachment to the ideal, but shrink back from the practical reality that seeking it out would make them face.

It is impossible to follow a guide who does not believe fully in the venture. It must be a consuming passion with him which no gloom, no defeat and no sentiment can ever destroy.

In the fourth place, our guide must be a comrade of those who go by routes other than those he follows. It is true that most of the journeys in this world may be made by many routes. A man may believe that the route he has found is best of all, but he is no true guide if he does not recognize both the obstacles in his path and also some of the advantages of the other routes. If there are deserts on the southern route across America, there are ice storms across the northern route. The true guide is one who is a comrade of other guides and who recognizes the virtues of their routes, and also their contributions to the knowledge concerning those paths. If there are three or four ways to climb a mountain, the competent guide is not the one who refuses to know the other guides or their routes. The competent guide is the one who gladly recognizes the others, who seeks them out, and who, by comradeship, shares their experiences. That is the man whom we can finally trust to find the safest path.

Fifth, our guide must have studied the forces with which we shall have to deal. Can we imagine an airplane pilot who had not studied air currents, or a guide across the Sahara who

had not studied the power of the sun and the problem of lack of water? Then, if someone is to be our guide through a moral or spiritual crisis, he must have studied the intricate and complex forces of life which go to create these moments of crisis in moral and spiritual affairs. No one can start piloting a plane through the air with knowledge gleaned only from a book on what to do when an airplane falls. So many of our moral and spiritual guides are like a pilot of an airplane — if we can imagine such a one — who can tell us that the plane is taking a nose dive to the earth but does not know how to keep a plane in the air. So many guides are able to tell us what is wrong; so few know *why* things are wrong and what we can do about them. The true guide must be one who has so studied the forces that deal with us, and with which we have to deal, that he can work out a safe route for us.

The sixth characteristic of a competent guide arises out of the fifth, for our guide must be one who is able to inspire us with confidence. If we are not quite sure whether he is going to lead us to a safe rock or over the precipice, we are not likely to follow him. Men will follow a leader who can inspire them with utter confidence in his skill and in his certainty of victory. At Trafalgar, Lord Nelson was bombarded with fearful stories of the number of the French ships, and it was pointed out to him that their sails seemed to cover the Mediterranean. But Nelson put his spyglass up to his blind eye, crying, " I cannot see them, sail on," and today a Nelson monument stands in Trafalgar Square because of the confidence that guide could command. If there can be such leaders in war, we know there must be many others to inspire us in following the ways of life and peace.

The last imperative is that the guide we want must be able to make any sacrifice that is necessary. There is not one of us but thrills to the tales of the Alpine guides. The picture of an unfaltering man striding into perilous paths, leading a chain of fellow human beings tied to him by a rope, is one of the most inspiring that can come to us. If suddenly the guide feels a pull on the rope, indicating that some traveler has lost his footing, immediately he thrusts his staff deep into the snow and ice and stiffens his whole body to hold the line. If a traveler is lost, the guide searches until he is found or until the cold and ice have stopped the searcher forever.

Why are men willing to tie themselves to the rope that binds them to a man they have never seen before, trusting to his leadership in climbing, say, the Matterhorn? Simply because they are sure that the guide is willing to make any sacrifice that is necessary. Men will follow that guide to the end of the way.

II

In a recent book, Hugh Frame has portrayed for us in graphic terms the rise of the spiritual consciousness in man. He tells us that the first really individual person in human history was the boy king, Akhnaton, who became ruler of Egypt in 1300 B.C., at the age of twelve. He began the interpretation of a spiritual religion. Due to the fact that there was in existence in his country a firmly established formal religion supported by conservative priests, there began with this king the battle which every free spirit has had to wage with the forces of reaction in religion. He was compelled to leave the established seat of religion at Thebes and build a new city to develop the worship of the sun. But the sun

worship quickly grew into a worship of the power which created the sun, and it was not long before this pharaoh was praying to "the Father which is in heaven." Like the Hebrews after him, he made no image of God, for God was a spirit. In that age, this king practiced simplicity of life, admitted the equality of women, stressed the sanctity of marriage and the family, and came to be called "a son of God living in truth."

The high religion of the spirit taught by this ancient pharoah came to an end with his death. The old order returned, but he had caught hold of a bit of the truth which, in his words, would remain true "till the swan turned black and the crow turned white, till the hills rose up to travel, and the deeps rushed into the rivers." This man was a guide to mankind.*

He was the first of a long line which was to include such men as Buddha and Plato. But we find most of these guides within the pages of the Old Testament. Think of the long list — Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Micah, Malachi! These were the men to whom the ages after them have turned, and turning have found guidance. These were the men of whom it was later to be said that "the world was not worthy." They were guides for seekers.

Are we willing to stop there? Somehow, when we have named that company — the company of those who are far more significant and meaningful to human life than any emperors or conquerors — somehow one more name comes into our minds. Shall we include him among the guides of mankind, and if so, in what place shall we put him?

* Hugh Frame, *Wonderful Counsellor* (Harper & Bros., 1936), chap. 2.

III

There came a time in Jewish history when the light of life seemed to have gone out. A powerful alien empire had reached out and conquered the people. Their worship, their work and their homes were at the mercy of invaders who held nothing sacred but power and loot. But at the doors of the houses in the evening the fathers and mothers would tell the children of the ancient hope that some day he would come who would redeem Israel. From a strange quarter there came a new voice, the voice of John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming that all men should repent for the kingdom of God was at hand. Immediately the hope rose in thousands of breasts that the day of Jehovah had come. But John said, not so, that he was not the redeemer. "There is one who cometh after me," he said, "whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose. I baptize you with water, but he will let the spirit of God come upon you."

Then, one day, that one came to John, and Jesus of Nazareth walked into the life of mankind.

Is he the guide for seekers? Let us not go to the creeds to find out about him. They have never been able to do anything but blur our vision. Let us look at those realistic demands we said we would make of those who would be our guides, and see how he meets them.

He must have been over the way we would take. The way is life like ours with our hope of making a triumph of it. He was born a poor boy, of parents who were simple people. He lived so quietly in his village, so much a part of its everyday life, that he was known as Jesus of Nazareth. When he went out into life, it could be said of him that he had no place to

lay his head. He lost his best friends, he met with suspicion and ridicule. But he drew to him companions who understood him and he found a great joy in life. Yet at the last he had to cry, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That seemed to be the end, but centuries later a Roman emperor exclaimed, "O Galilean, thou hast conquered!"

He knew what the guides before him had tried to do. His description of his task in life was framed in the words of Isaiah. He cherished the work and words of every prophet of mankind before him. He believed utterly in the venture upon which he asked us to follow him. Nothing could daunt him, nothing could sway him from his purpose. When they set a cross in front of him, he could say, "Lift me up on that cross, and I will draw all mankind my way." Traitors could not make him despair, and timid hearts could not break his confidence.

He was a comrade of those who go by other routes. When he was told of others who were helping mankind as he was doing, he did not chide them but said that those who were not against him were for him, and he welcomed their power and their spirit. At the end, there was a thief on a cross beside him, and he said that the thief would go with him to paradise because he had sought God. He was the comrade of every true guide and of all who sought for guidance.

He was a student of the forces with which he had to deal. When we face Jesus, we face a realist. He was no rosy sentimentalist, denying reality and withdrawing into a fantasy of color and incense. He faced the powers of darkness, of entrenched evil in high places, of greed and lust in the hearts of men. But he faced also the reality of the powers of goodness, the almost superhuman power of the spirit of man

to overcome the powers of evil, and in that he placed an unconquerable faith.

He was able to inspire followers with confidence. Glance at the story of the ages since his time. Men following him to the death: Stephen and Paul; men thrown to the lions in the Colosseum; men standing at the stake while fagots burned about them; men changing the course of human history because he taught them to believe that light and truth and goodness must conquer over greed and darkness.

A glorious band, the chosen few
On whom his spirit came.
The valiant saints, their hope they knew,
And mocked the cross and flame.

The guide of mankind must be able to make any sacrifice that is necessary. One night he came to that point in life which comes at some moment to every man and woman, and stood facing two roads: on one, the chance to gain the world, on the other, the chance to gain a soul. One path led to the place where a mob thronged, shouting his name with hosannas, eager to make him the king who would overthrow their enemies and set up a temporary triumph. Quietly, but serenely, he chose the other road and walked on up a hill on which, set against the evening sky, was a cross. It is no wonder that down through the years since that time men and women have knelt, singing,

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling.

We used to wonder, and say

Jesus, and shall it ever be
A mortal man, ashamed of Thee?

No one could write that hymn now. There is not a man or woman in all the world who is ashamed of Jesus of Nazareth. We are ashamed of ourselves, but we are not ashamed of him. In an era when every other guide has failed us, man has turned to him. With George Bernard Shaw we are ready to say:

> I am no more of a Christian than Pilate was, or you are, gentle hearer; and yet, like Pilate, I greatly prefer Jesus of Nazareth to Annas or Caiaphas; and I am ready to admit that I see no way out of the world's misery but the way which would have been found by his will.

There stands Jesus of Nazareth looking out over the world as he looked out over Jerusalem, the only one who is seriously bidding for the mind and heart of the world. Men will continue to ask who he was and who he is, and the truest response will be found not in an argument but in a mystical awareness. He himself said that the answer of man to that question had been revealed not by flesh and blood, but by the spirit of God. As all the world looks at him, Christian, Jew and Gentile, we shall, each one of us, have our own particular view and our own most satisfying definition.

Yet all of us, no matter whether we come from the East or from the West, will want to say that there is his mind and spirit; there is his gracious, powerful life; there is a good man carrying a cross that is too great for him to bear. More and more of us are wanting to say, "There is the son of God."

FOUR

THE DISEASE THAT DRAINS OUR POWERS

Most of us are scientifically minded enough to understand the truth that at the moment any form of life begins, at that same moment the forces of deterioration also begin. The healthiest body contains within it those forces which finally will destroy it. We have been discussing thus far the basis for a robust, strong and vital faith. It will be good to face frankly the problem of what to do with the disease that drains this vitality.

We remember those words that Paul of Tarsus wrote to the little band of Jews huddled together at Rome when the empire was at its height: "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? For the good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practice!" They sound like the cry of despair that a patient utters to his physician. What Paul tried to say was that some disease was at work in his spiritual life, draining its powers.

I

For most of us there is no question about the reality of sin and of evil. We may not know what sin and evil are, but we know what they do. It is well to begin where a doctor begins with a disease, with its reality. If a man has typhoid fever there is no use in discussing what typhoid fever might or might not be. The fact is that it is present in the body, and the need is to recognize it.

Our first step, therefore, is to recognize the reality of the existence of sin and evil. Some groups begin by denying the reality of any evil, seeking thus to do away with it. Of course, if evil can be waved out of life, there is no need to discuss it, but somehow that little statue of the three monkeys with their hands over their ears, their eyes and their mouths, entitled "Hear, see and speak no evil," is not a picture of life that seems real. Even though we close our eyes, we cannot be blind to the awful results of evil that lie around us. Even though we put our hands over our ears, that does not stop our thinking evil. And though we put our hands over our mouths, it does not keep our lips from speaking evil.

It is true that the people who take the course of denying the presence of sin and evil are intelligent. It is not possible to say that followers of Christian Science, and of the other cults which are comparable to it, are unintelligent people, for that is not so. What can be said about them is that they are not realists. There is, of course, no law which compels a man to be a realist. Anyone can believe that the world is like a midsummer night's dream. But most men and women want to be realists in a real world, and as realists they recognize the presence not only of beauty, but also of ugliness; not only of health, but also of pain; not only of joy, but also of sorrow; not only of good, but also of evil. We may not know what sin is, but we do know what it does.

Let us begin, then, by recognition of the stark reality of sin which is the root of evil and of its terrible havoc upon life. No one can debate with us the reality of sin. We accept it as a fact. Most of us are willing to say with Paul that there is some disease at work in our spiritual lives and that

that disease is draining us of our power. The good which we would do, we do not. The evil that we would not, that we practice. That is the disease that drains our powers, and we call it sin.

II

Man has interpreted the existence of sin in two ways. First of all, he has said that we sin because our very nature is evil and therefore we are destined to sin. It could not be said, of course, that God had created us sinners, so an attempt was made to show that we had become sinners in a very natural and plausible way. Man had been made good by God, but Adam, the first man, had become evil by foolishly eating the forbidden fruit. That was the cause of his downfall, and so sin entered into his nature, and that sinful nature was passed down to all the rest of us. We remember the lines of the *New England Primer:* "In Adam's fall, we sinned all."

By that fall the very nature of man became sinful, and so man has gone on through the generations, continually sinning, not because he wants to, but because his very nature is venal and evil, and therefore he must do evil rather than good. His spirit is diseased in its very essence. For that there is only one cure, the supernatural intervention of God, who, because the guilt of this sin was assumed by Christ, can now step in and change the nature of man from evil to good. In all this arrangement man has only one part to play. It will be fruitless for him to try to be good, for he cannot if he would. He cannot by himself resist evil, for he is destined to sin.

For centuries that was the concept of Christian theology,

and it is very important to note that the pessimists of our times are demanding that we return to it. Under such a theology the only thing man can do is to accept the plan of salvation and so be changed supernaturally from evil to good. The grace of God, meeting the faith of man, does for him what he cannot do for himself.

There was an opposite approach to the problem of the existence of sin — the thought of Rousseau. He led a revolt against the older conception, one which swung the pendulum to the other extreme. He said that "all is good coming from the hands of the Author of all things, and all degenerates in the hands of man." Such romantic idealism caused men in the eighteenth century to look at man through rosy glasses and see nothing but good. Man is all good, and he degenerates only because of the impact upon him of the evil forces of the world outside.

A realistic view of life, however, seems to demand a recognition of factors which both of these views seem to have omitted. What must we say of facts of life such as these, for example? The daughter of Mme. Curie received the Nobel prize in chemistry for 1935. Her mother had received it in 1911 for her discovery of radium. This daughter of a famous mother, together with her husband who is also a famous chemist, has been at the task of bombarding atoms with electric power so as to release radium energy which can be used to cure disease. She has been so successful in this effort to make accessible the means of curing illness and prolonging human life that she has been awarded the highest recognition that a chemist can receive. When we hear this story, we think of it as an indication that man is good, and that he will work to the limit of his powers of mind and body to help save and preserve life.

Only a few days before the news of this noble chemist's reward appeared, there was another news item. It stated that in a New Jersey city four racketeers had been shot down and killed by another gang of gunmen. The whole story recounted a long series of criminal acts: stealing, extortion of money from various businesses, drunkenness, licentious living, and finally a series of sixteen murders in one week. Link these with the whole gamut of crime of which these murders are but the culmination, and you have some measure of the trail of evil that men blaze in this world.

Right here is the problem that we face. In the same world, and made of the same material, are the daughter and son-in-law of Mme. Curie, and these four gangsters. Certainly man is not wholly bad if even one member of the human family can spend her life in the effort to heal disease and prolong life. But certainly man is not wholly good if a great many men give themselves over to the exploitation of their fellow men in terms of racketeering. Upon a basis of actuality like this, surely it can be seen that the two solutions, that of original sin and that of innate perfection marred by man's folly, are far too simple and therefore unsatisfying. Even a casual glance at the life about us is enough to convince us that we are not all doomed to sin in spite of our best efforts. There is no way in which we can put the life of Phillips Brooks, and that of thousands like him, into a moral test tube and point to the result as a demonstration of original sin. Yet it is equally true that we cannot put a bandit in a moral test tube and point to what we find as a demonstration of innate goodness.

III

In this dilemma, we turn to Jesus for our clearest insight into the nature of sin in man. He showed us that sin is caused by losing the way. He told three stories — of a lost coin, a lost sheep and a lost boy. All three objects were out of touch with their natural life; the coin was separated from its owner; the sheep was following its own way apart from the flock; the boy was seeking heedlessly the fulfillment of his own desires along roads of folly. Jesus had one word for all of them: they were lost.

They were not estranged from their right place because it was their nature to be evil. If that had been so, Jesus would have had to admit that in wandering away they were but fulfilling their natural bent and his solution would have been for God to perform a supernatural act to change their natures. But the shepherd of the sheep and the father of the boy believed that the natural desire of the sheep and of the boy was to be engaged in right living at home, though each had wandered away and become lost. When the boy turned away from his sordid life and returned to his home, the father did not say he must change his whole nature. Instead he said, "This, my boy, was lost, and is found."

Paul used the same idea in his simile of missing the mark. Jesus was a workman and Paul was a soldier, so they used different analogies when they spoke, but they were both getting after the same thing. As a soldier, Paul knew that the desire of a marksman is to hit the center of the target. It is not his nature to try deliberately to miss it. But he does miss the mark often, not because he wills to, but for a hundred different reasons — like defective eyesight or a shaking hand, for instance. He loses the true aim.

Jesus, it seems, was always trying to tell us the same thing — that it was man's nature to find the right road and travel that way. But, constantly, travelers whose aim it is to find the right road mistake the wrong road for the right one. That is especially true in the moral realm. It is much more difficult to discover the right road in personal morality than it is to locate the right road on a state highway map. The goal of life, the destination which we want to reach, is joy, satisfaction and completeness in life. Think of the many roads that *seem* to lead to them. Is it any wonder that a traveler on the road to happiness and satisfaction so often loses the way?

Consider the boy of whom Jesus spoke in the parable of the prodigal son, for example. That boy did not say, " I will now go out and be evil." What he wanted was joy and satisfaction and interest, and, looking for these, he lost the way. He thought he could find these things by getting hold of his inheritance and then spending it as fast and as furiously as possible in the night life of his times, among those who were doing the same thing. What countless numbers, before and after him, have had the temptation to follow that road because they think it will lead them to happiness! Like them, the boy tried to find interest and joy in riotous living.

Then, right at that point, Jesus brings us face to face with what he considered the essential nature of man and the explanation of sin. Jesus said, " Then he came to himself." When he came to himself, that is, when he came to his real nature, what did he do? He said, " I will return to my father, and say, ' Father, make me as one of thy servants.' " There is no doubt as to what Jesus considered the true nature of man to be. When a man comes to himself, to a realization of his true nature and to a recognition of what he was really

made to be, he finds that he was made to be wise and good instead of foolish and evil.

Jesus never compromised on that issue. No matter whom he met — a publican who was a grafter; a notorious woman who was a harlot; a fisherman who was a tempestuous soul with an angry temper — all of them, and others like them, were men and women who, when they came to themselves, found their real nature to be good. That does not mean he glossed over their sins with sentimental syrup, saying that these errors made no difference in the character of the individual. He called such actions sin, and he never minimized the terrible toll such sins took of life. But he never believed that any man deliberately chose sin as being of greater value than goodness if he really understood true values. Men and women like Zacchaeus and Mary Magdalene had lost the way, but being shown the way through understanding and love, they came to themselves and found what they had always been seeking, that true joy and satisfaction which they had not found in spending their money for that which was not bread.

IV

It is absolutely necessary, of course, to understand the reality of the powers that lure us from the right road to the wrong. The ancient dictum that " the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation " was never more true than it is in our time. All of us are less equipped for life than we might have been when we have physical weaknesses which have been transmitted to us by the sins and omissions of the generations before us. So many people have physical and mental defects which

keep them from finding the way. A short while ago there was a criminal called " America's number one bad man." He finally paid for his folly with his life. But after his death, we learned that this man, Dillinger, had a tubercular history, that his mind was adolescent even though he was an adult, that he had been brought up in a family which had always lived below the subsistence level. We are beset by forces that push us into wrong roads, or weaknesses which make it impossible to seek and find the right ones.

It is also true that man finds himself in the midst of social conditions which make him a partner in sin even when he is unaware of it. In that sense, the title of Reinhold Niebuhr's book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society,* is true. Because of economic injustice, governmental corruption, oppressive social customs, racial antipathies and senseless methods of education, we are swept into actions of collective sin just as we would be swept over Niagara Falls if we were caught in the current. Most of the time we are pushed along the wrong road by the sheer mass of humanity moving along that road. That is why the best of us can be partners in the blighting effects of social sin without being aware of it.

Gather these facts together with our own willingness to be foolish instead of wise, to be lazy instead of busy, to be heedless instead of sensitive, and you have the forces which lead us to lose the way and to miss the mark. Then we are in the grip of the disease that drains our powers, and it is time for us to recognize that such disease in the moral realm has to be met in the same manner as does disease in the physical realm — with ceaseless combat. It is true that the body was made for health, and it is also true that the soul was made for goodness, but just as the triumph of health is due to

struggle and ceaseless vigilance, so moral victory is brought about only by that same kind of struggle and vigilance.

The fact is that we are engaged in a constant spiritual tug of war. Paul of Tarsus, who delighted to interpret life in terms of a struggle, phrased this conflict for us in the words, "For I delight in the law of God in the inward man, but I see a different law in me warring against the law of my mind." Man does not consciously resist the spiritual life. Within us is the presence of the spirit of God's nature, delighting us and drawing us to him. But at the same time we are conscious of a different law pulling against that desire. That has been the recognition of every great spiritual soul, and it has also been the recognition of every great religion of spiritual power and perception. All life finds itself in the grip of the tension between that in which the soul delights and that which is of lesser and of baser value, and it is as impossible to believe that the spiritual life moves on with no struggle against evil as it is to believe that the underbrush can be kept back from a plowed field without struggle and vigilance. A religion which refuses to recognize the spiritual tug of war is as helpless and as useless as would be a county farm agent who believed that plowed fields were a natural phenomenon. It is the nature of the earth to produce fields which yield grain, but those grain-producing fields are developed by struggle against the powers that war against them. The simple fact that true religion has to teach us — and the truth of religion can be measured by the degree to which it does teach us this — is that life is a continual struggle between the heart of God, with its eternal issues, and the heart of man, with its temporary concerns.

It is precisely at this point that man loses the way in his

failure to bring temporal values into their true subordination to eternal values. It is probably true that the failure is due more to emotional factors than to those of the intellect. We may know what we ought to do, but we have no emotional powers of control to keep us from losing the way. Here, then, is where the power of God to sustain our wills comes into action and grants us a victory.

This separation from the ways of God is probably what the original conception of the fall of man tried to tell us. By nature we are made to desire goodness, but through carelessness and lack of control we lose the way. We are defeated in the spiritual tug of war. Then we become bewildered, separated from God, and from influences potent enough to keep us from sinking deeper into sin.

But, " when he came to himself " — to use the immortal description of Jesus regarding the youth who had lost both the way and the struggle — he put his trust in the faith that in his father's house there was enough and to spare. There were enough love and enough power even for him. When a man comes to himself, he finds not only that he was created to delight in God in the inward man, but also that he can be secure in the love and mercy and understanding of God which will grant him a renewal of life.

The disease has been conquered, the struggle has been won. " This, my son, was lost and is found; he was dead, and is alive again! "

FIVE

DEATH — THE TERMINATION OR FULFILLMENT OF LIFE?

When we approach the question of life after death, we begin to realize that we are all one, that no ultimate distinctions exist among us that are real enough to persist beyond death. The book of Revelation describes this understanding in picturesque words: "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne." In these words can be found no recognition of distinctions of race or color or creed. Our little systems have their day and cease to be. When those who have passed beyond this existence stand before God, the only distinctions among them are between those who have made a great adventure of human living and those who have made a small adventure of it, but both groups are there. Here, then, is the one quest upon which we are all united, the one quest of life which levels all our barriers and fuses all our differences into one whole.

The wistful query of man from time immemorial, "If a man die shall he live again?" is also our question, for no matter who or what we are, we must be confronted by the question of whether death is the termination or the fulfillment of life. How fleeting our systems, statements and divisions appear when we ask whether life as we know it has any significance beyond this experience that we can see and feel.

Through all the ages man has asked this question. At his moments of clearest insight he has been thrilled by the faith that life has a significance and a meaning which demand that the souls of men, the great and the small, shall stand before the throne of God, eager to be told of the next adventure he has in store for them.

I

This faith comes to us, first of all, through the necessity of giving meaning to our present existence. There is always one question which a person asks when he is told to do anything. That question is, "What for?" No one does anything willingly unless he can be convinced that there is a real answer to his question as to its purpose. Somehow, rational beings are not willing to do things which have no use or meaning. What we must know is whether what we are asked to do is useful and has some sort of reasonableness. If we can find real meaning instead of futility we will engage ourselves in the undertaking.

A boy will swing Indian clubs, he will write down figures on a piece of paper, he will try to push a football up and down a muddy field. These things, seen as isolated activities, in themselves are silly. If they have no meaning other than the motions, no boy could be brought within sight of such actions. He asks, "What for?" Then he is answered. The swinging of the Indian clubs will give his arms and chest a development which will enable him to make a football team. The putting down of figures on a paper will teach him that arithmetic and geometry and chemistry which will enable him to earn a living. The carrying of a football up a field is worth while because there is a goal line at the end of the

field, and if he carries the ball across that line he will accomplish something for his team and for his college. The whole difference lies in the fact that there is an answer to the question, " What for? "

Several years ago two groups of college boys lined up against each other on a football field in Cambridge. The rain fell in torrents and the field was a sea of mud. But for almost two hours those boys struggled to carry a football. Why? Because eleven of them had on crimson sweaters and eleven had on blue sweaters, and fused into the mind and soul of each boy was the name of a university. They were not merely carrying a football through the rain and the mud. Each boy could see the glory of this struggle, and that glory gave deep meaning to his part in it.

Life asks for endurance, asks us to endure the rain and the mud of the elemental tasks of life, of the strain and stress of daily living, of the struggle to reach purposes and ends. We do not ask the question of whether we are willing to endure. Instead, we ask only, " What for? " Is there any meaning or reason for this constant struggle, suffering, pain and attempt to achieve?

Here is the answer of religion: " And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne." They were those who had come through the mud and the storm, who had endured the pain, and were holding in their hands the achievement of their lives to present before the throne of the One who could use such a gift of life. The picture is glorious because it is so incomplete. It does not offer a vista of gardens like those at the palace of Versailles. Instead, it is the drama of the souls of men and women, some of them great, and some of them small, standing before the throne of the Eter-

nal, waiting for that word which will make use of what they have made of life. That is the meaning of existence.

II

We value this picture further because it provides a use for human experience for which otherwise there is no significance. One of the greatest perplexities of life is caused by the fact that just as we really get ready to live, life stops. When we are very young we are sure that we are now ready to live and that we have all the answers and all the strength needed to meet life. That mood, fortunately, lasts only for a few years, and then life begins to teach us its lessons. Through long years we go to the school of life. For some of us, headstrong wills and selfish desires make the process a hard and bitter one. For others, fused through the pain and loss and suffering are experiences of joy and gladness and peace. Step by step we begin to learn the lessons of life, to recognize its true values and to sense the realities that are incorruptible and eternal. With joy we begin to feel that now we know the meaning of life. But by that time the years have taken their toll of our strength, and then life stops.

Is it true that such was intended to be the final story? Can we still call this a rational universe, still continue to believe in God, if we must believe that there is no commencement day in the school of life and no place in which such experience can be used? We learn lessons not merely to exercise our minds, but to use these lessons in experience. Think of a world in which people were made to go to school and then were sent home from school on graduation day to sit in a dark cell for the rest of life! It is madness to think of life in those terms. Commencement day at college is a

day of joy because it marks the time when a youth, well equipped, moves out into a world which has a use for the preparation he has gained. No one would be able to attend a commencement which marked the graduation of a group of equipped students into dark cells.

But no one can think rationally about life if he must believe that we go through all that life teaches us, on to great experience and understanding, and then move into dark cells forever. Think of the lives we have known — those of rich experience, those with spiritual insight and ethical understanding, those with large endowments for great service. No one can believe in God, or think rationally, and believe also that there is no place where such treasures of life are used. We do not know how they are used, and we never shall in this life, but we can believe that because God can be trusted, somewhere souls with such experience and such possessions of heart stand waiting before him.

III

We also believe in this picture of life after death because of the gospel of the second chance. There is nothing that man will cling to as he will to this gospel of hope. It is interesting to see the expression of faith in this doctrine even in those forms of life which seem most secular. Raymond Clapper, a political reporter, recently began his column in the *Washington Daily News* (April 10, 1936) with these words:

> No one has to be religious to feel the moving spirit of Easter. It does not matter much whether the Easter story be history, or legend springing out of the faint

racial memory of pagan rites. For the story it tells us is of the eternal faith of the human race that out of our failures, out of our self-made tragedies, we shall some time live in a better world. On a Good Friday the United States went into the World War, with the hope that its sacrifice would end all wars and bring justice and a better life to people of all nations. That hope has not been realized, and now there is a widespread belief that the world sways on the brink of another catastrophe. Yet the Easter season sees a resurgence of fresh hope which spurs mankind on through the darkest discouragement.

That is the gospel of the second chance in a world which so desperately needs such an opportunity. We find ourselves in a world that, if left to its attitudes of blindness, stupidity and arrogance, will be directed to its doom, damned not by celestial authority but by itself. Yet each Easter season " sees that resurgence of fresh hope which spurs mankind onward through the darkest discouragement." There must be some opportunity to do things in a nobler, better way than we have ever been able to do them here. For no matter what our present state of life may be, we still dream of " a golden town where golden houses are."

To the individual, a religion without the gospel of a second chance is no religion at all, for he needs something more than ethical precepts. He needs another chance to be less foolish, less stupid and far more noble. The worst of us cannot face death unless we know this to be true. The best of us know how much better we could be and want a chance to fulfill our better possibilities. On the cross at the side of the one on

which Jesus was crucified was a man who had made a mess of life. He did not need a judgment day, for he had already passed his own judgment upon his lost life. Instead of judgment, he heard the words which meant life to him: "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise." A man had found his heart's desire, the gospel of the second chance to make life victorious. "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne," waiting for the gates to open for one more chance at life.

IV

The picture of life is never complete if it does not contain the possibility of growth beyond this life. What has made many people doubt the reality of any kind of immortality is that immortality has been visualized as a static reproduction of this present existence. That would not be joy, it would be nightmare. The mere thought of this world as an endless state of eternity lets us readily see why so many of us would dread immortality. Who could contemplate living with his present life, or the life of the present world, through endless time? That is not the existence we crave after this life.

Consider even the best of us — what limited minds and narrow souls the greatest of us have. The sins of the generations before us, as well as our own sins, have dwarfed and stunted our mental and spiritual development, and God knows and we know that we could not think of eternal life with our present selves. But consider also the life of the world. No one of us dares imagine an eternity spent with the intolerance, the narrow loyalties, the rampant nationalisms and the lust for power of our modern world. Who

could live in a heaven in which were concentration camps, ghettos for Jews, segregation of Negroes, poison gas for peoples of other nations, and exploitation of the children of God for personal gain? We would blaspheme against a God who took us as we are now to become eternal. We can endure tragedy, but that would be beyond tragedy.

No, if there is to be existence of any kind after death, it must be not simply life, but life with eternal meaning. Yet there are glorious glimpses of life with such meaning within this present life of ours. We know we would not dare to turn this present world into eternity, but we do know that there is much that has eternal meaning within us now. What we want is the message that death will usher us in some way into all the possibilities for growth that we deny or are denied in this life.

The God we have found as the God we can be sure about is a God who neither slumbers nor sleeps. Every part and every particle of the universe he made is alive and moving. Nothing ever stands still, and nothing is ever finally at rest. The God we know is forever at work, and the law of life within his world is the law of change and growth. That thrill of growth is within the life of the world. No one of us need ever fear that any form of life is to be made permanently static either here or hereafter. God is

Out on the path of the outmost sun, through utter darkness hurled,
Further than ever comet flared or vagrant star dust swirled,
Adventuring with those that praise their God, as with him they serve his world.

V

Throughout these chapters we have been attempting to discover the nature of the universe and of life, and our study has brought us to the conclusion that there exists a God who is rational and purposeful and has an attitude of consideration and benevolence toward human beings. The next plausible and logically inevitable step, therefore, is that such a God is not only trustworthy, good and loving toward us for the period of mortal life on this planet only, but plans something in some future time and some future place for these uncompleted, undeveloped and unsatisfied lives that we have begun here. Certainly we should have to give up all belief in the love of God if we had to believe that he would bring us so far and then allow the uncompleted lives of even the worst of us to pass into oblivion. We know that such would not be the nature of our human love, and can we think that the love of God could be less? Is it not unthinkable that God should pour out his love on man during this brief period of earthly existence, and then let the soul of man go out forever? Man cannot let his loved ones go. Can God?

We should remember that the modern understanding of the universe tells us that God does not abandon his created life. Certainly what is true of matter must be true of the soul, and we now understand that matter is never finally destroyed. When we postulate the attitude of love as well as power within the Creator, we are able to perceive that his concern for the soul must be even greater than his concern for mere matter. Yet we may base this faith on the interpretation which modern physics gives to us concerning the amazing properties of matter. Again let us turn to Professor

Arthur Compton's book, *The Freedom of Man,* for there this physicist gives us a graphic and astonishing description of the endless properties of matter.

Dr. Compton uses the illustration of the putting out of a candle's light. It is an old illustration, used by those who believe that death ends all, to show how the spark of life goes out forever. But, says Compton, modern science has given this parable a new significance. We may take the flame to represent the body, and the light which burns from it, the soul.

> In a candle flame vapor comes from the wick and air comes from the side, forming a steady stream of burning gases passing continually through the flame. There is an intaking of food and oxygen at one end, and an outpouring of waste products at the other. The material of the flame is continually changing just as the cells of our bodies change; yet the form of the flame remains the same. But puff, and the flame is out! Is this the end?
>
> What is happening to the light? The flame was material, made up of atoms and molecules; but the light is a different kind of thing — electromagnetic radiation, flying away at tremendous speed. We know that if the candle was out under the open sky, its light was streaming into interstellar space, where it will keep going forever. The flame was mortal, but the light which it gave is immortal.
>
> More than that, the escaping light carried with it the story of the candle's life. If, on some far distant planet, the light is caught in a spectroscope, it can tell that it was born of carbon burning in oxygen. By a study of the

light an amazing number of things could be found out about the life from which it came.*

The description is enlightening to us as the parable of the unquenchable and inextinguishable soul of man with which God has concern. The flame may be blown out, but the light goes on forever. That is the scientific basis for a rational belief in the immortality of the soul of man.

But there is for such faith an even deeper basis, which comes from the intuitions of man's heart as it opens to what it believes to be the heart of God. It is brought to us through the insight of Jesus, whose faith was that his relationship to God was not a temporary one of thirty-three years' duration on a little spot of earth across which a man could walk in a day's journey, but was for a time far beyond our present ken and in a space " further than ever star dust swirled." That is the faith of the heart, now buttressed by the insight of the physicist and of the astronomer. For even though man were all alone in the world, with no help from test tube or telescope, somehow he would feel, and feeling, say:

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

* Arthur H. Compton, *The Freedom of Man*, pp. 142–43.

PART TWO

HOW WE MAY USE SUCH BELIEFS

SIX

THE USE OF PRAYER

In the year 1912 England sent her greatest steamship across the Atlantic ocean. It was the *Titanic,* the largest ship built up to that time. Half way across the ocean, the ship hit a submerged iceberg and soon sank, carrying to death most of the passengers. At the moment of the tragedy, the steamship *California* was only about thirty miles away. It was before the days of full and complete radio service, though the wireless was in existence. Wireless operators at that time were few, and there was only one of them on the *California.* He closed his apparatus that night at 10:30, and went to bed. An hour later the *Titanic* operator was sending out frantic S O S signals, but the wireless set on the *California* was closed and deaf to the pleas for help. The *Titanic* went down while another ship which could have reached its side in less than an hour went sailing on its course totally unaware of the tragedy.

In this tragedy we find one of the most dramatic portrayals of the two parts of the problem of prayer. When the *Titanic* struck the iceberg and the horror of their plight broke upon the passengers, the whole boat was turned into a prayer meeting. While men and women knelt on the decks and prayed to God for help, the band changed its music from dance tunes to " Nearer, My God, to Thee." Yet most of those people went down to death in the midst of their prayers.

The other factor makes the problem still more difficult. The steamship *California* was only an hour away, equipped with lifeboats and men to rescue those stricken people, yet in the moments when men and women were praying in agony, the wireless operator closed his office and went to sleep. What kind of being is God, and what does prayer mean to him, when he is a God who quietly surveys the panorama of a great ship sailing straight into the path of an iceberg; watches a collision with that ice which tears the boat to pieces and carries thousands to death; and then, in that same panorama, allows a wireless operator on a nearby ship to close his apparatus for the night so that no appeal for help can be received? What kind of God is that, and what is the meaning of prayer to him? These questions arise from the circumstances of life, from those which are as dramatic as this on down through all the simpler occurrences which contain within them the same dilemma.

I

The problem cannot be side-stepped. The simple fact is that most people were taught to pray when they were children, taught to expect that they could talk with God and through that prayer find the power and help of God. But God does not save the lives of the praying people on the *Titanic;* he does nothing to stop the wireless operator on the *California* from shutting up his instruments for the night and leaving his post. All through life we see that kind of situation repeated over and over again. We discover that the same fate came that night on the *Titanic* to those who prayed and to those who did not. By going to sleep, the *California* operator deserted the praying as well as the un-

praying. What, then, is the meaning of prayer? It is not the questions of the scoffers and the scorners that concern us; it is the question of those who seek earnestly to live the Christian life and who have to face realities discovered by intelligent observation and experience. They are the people who ask whether we can still find a meaning for prayer.

The questions that disturb us, of course, are of the kind that are raised by the incidents we have mentioned. Do they mean that God does not answer the prayers of agonized victims, and that therefore their fervent petitions are simply voices lost in the storm? And if God is all-powerful, do these incidents mean that he is not interested in keeping awake a wireless operator on another ship so that prayers on a doomed ship can be answered? What is the meaning of prayer?

If we are going to attempt to live the Christian life in terms of the widest mental and spiritual understanding, we must begin to get a clearer perception of how it is that God works in the universe. Much of our religious expression is still molded by the belief that God is waiting to do what we want him to do. There is nothing wrong with that belief except that it marks a stage of childhood rather than of maturity. So the child believes its mother to be waiting. The child has certain desires for food, comfort and enjoyment, and it expects its mother to respond when it asks for these things. The child says: "My mother loves me, doesn't she? Certainly then she will do what I want her to." It is not argument, but maturity, which changes that conception of a mother's love.

So it is with our conception of the love of God. It is not that so many of our religious ideas are wrong, but that they are adolescent. We have so many of the child's ideas about

God, and the most current one is that God's work is simply to wait for a request from us, no matter how short-sighted or ill-advised it is, and then to rush to answer it. Our major task in living the Christian life is to discover the reality about the nature and work of God, and then to discover the great meaning of prayer in the light of that understanding.

II

The first step is to try to see whether God moves in ways of reasonableness rather than by caprice. The tom-toms of the medicine man have beaten for so long in primitive religion that their power and effects are still with us, and to a degree far greater than we probably realize. So many people who call themselves religious today have the feeling that God can be awakened and moved to do their will by the beating of the tom-toms of their prayers. That is obviously the religion of the childhood of the race, and the growth of the religious consciousness can be measured by the extent to which we have grown away from it and entered into the conception that God works for us through ways that are reasonable.

Let us go back again to our problem of the *Titanic*. How does God save us from the peril of icebergs? Primitive religion would say that when such an accident occurs God must be awakened to the peril his children are in, and that if we pray fervently enough God will use his power to circumvent the results of the accident, and will save us. God did not do that for his children that night. But if this fact is true, another fact is also true. There has not been an accident in which a steamship struck an iceberg in the north Atlantic since then. That has not been due to chance or to any re-

moval of icebergs. It has been due to the fact that men have studied the laws of the universe. They have made a study of the nature of those mountains of ice; have charted the periods of the year when the icebergs break up and begin their floating journeys; have timed their movements. The governments of the northern countries have placed in the dangerous areas patrol boats whose sole duty it is to chart the presence and movements of icebergs and to report them. Now every steamship captain knows the exact position of every iceberg as well as he knows the position of the rocks in a harbor. Besides that, he knows the general route a steamship must travel at certain times of the year. Because of these things, no more ships strike icebergs in the Atlantic ocean.

Is not what this fact implies a grander and more thrilling conception of the way God is at work in the world, and is it not a more majestic conception of God, than the idea of a sleeping giant who is so careless of his children that he has to be awakened by the frantic beat of their tom-toms to rush to their rescue? Our new conception of God is that of a Being who has constructed a universe with foresight for the safety of humanity, and has given men and women minds to think reasonably. If men build a ship with intelligence and honesty, and then use their minds to discover the form and time of the laws of the physical world, they find that they are perfectly safe in the ways of a dependable God. A man who has done these things can find that God is constantly awake and is constantly at work. " Behold, He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps."

That is the first step in the mature conception of prayer to God: the willingness to learn how the eternal God has constructed, with foresight and with consideration, a reason-

able and dependable world, and asks us to work with him in keeping humanity safe. Prayer consists of learning the reasonable and dependable ways of God, and then joining with him in maintaining them.

III

The second step is to discern the meaning of prayer in companionship. We can sense this best in our own personal experience, and we can describe it in the terms of our own lives, which are the terms common to us all. When I was a small boy my father used to take every care of me. He tucked me into bed every night, and he gave me my food, my clothing and my home. Whenever I wanted anything that I thought he might be able to give me, I asked him for it. Those needs were simple and obvious; they were food, clothing and shelter. He gave me all I needed.

But there were some things he knew I needed which he could never give me, such things as character and education and the ability to sustain myself in the world. He could give me a chance to secure those things, but that was all. There came a time, therefore, when he stopped giving me the necessities of life, and for years I have not received any of these things from him. He does not continue to feed me, to pick me up when I fall, to brush off my clothes and dry my tears. All those acts have ceased. Has therefore my whole relationship with my father ceased? Not in the slightest. Instead, it has grown and developed. Every week I write my father a letter and in it I never ask for a thing. I remember that he gave me a chance to equip myself for maturity and now I must stand upon what I gained through that chance. He cannot make up any deficiency in my character or my

education or my understanding. But there is one thing he can do. He can maintain a constant companionship with me, and I with him. We talk with each other about our problems and our thoughts, and there is the constant relationship of mutual understanding. It is not always through words. Sometimes it is through a silent contemplation when I am quite sure I know what his reactions would be without his telling me. I find that the relationship of maturity is far superior to that of adolescence, and that friendships are the basis of such relationships.

We have all had the understanding of that relationship. It is through such understanding that we shall be able to appreciate more truly the mature conception of the meaning of prayer. In the adolescence of the race the prayers were appeals for the fundamental needs of life, for man had no understanding of how to get them in other ways. But maturity has brought far greater needs, and we have discovered that these can be satisfied through achievement and not by gifts. The power to attain such satisfactions comes to us, we discover, not through bounties, but through the uplifting power of great companionships.

Here, then, is where we touch the mature meaning of prayer. There is nothing that compels us, of course, to secure the companionship of family and friends who can give us those rich incentives and appreciations and directions for the growth of our minds and souls. We can live without the companionship of such friends, but what fine-souled man or woman would want to? We crave these intimate friendships because we know that they become the source of our spiritual and mental growth.

So it is, then, with our mature companionship with the

spirit of God. We can do without it, but who would want to? Such communion is spiritual, but we are not now as willing to be heedless of spiritual values as once we were. We find the presence of God in so many places — the signs of his hand upon the course of history; the marks of his presence in the lives of saints; the sound of his voice in the moral thunder of the universe taking side with the good and the true; and, also, the light of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

It is through this companionship that we make the discovery that something good and righteous is seeking to use us. Such goodness and righteousness is seeking to have us put patrol boats among the icebergs of the North Atlantic so that ships may be safe. Prayer ceases to be the slothful practice of resting idly while we implore God to be the messenger boy of the universe. Prayer becomes that moment of companionship with the Eternal when the light breaks upon our waiting souls and reveals that Someone good and righteous is seeking to use us to accomplish his purpose among men. With such illumination men have charted the icebergs; scientists have discovered the cause of disease and the means of controlling it; poets have sung of beauty; and prophets have dreamed of the design for the city of God that is to rise among men. Prayer ceases to be the plea that something be done *for* us, and becomes the plea that something be done *through* us. Thus it is that prayer can never be unanswered by *God;* it can be unanswered only by *us.*

In such ways God answers us in moments of deep need caused by great loss. He does not tell us that the inevitable will be set aside. He comes to us saying that there is something for us to do, and that he will be there beside us as we

do it. The icebergs of all life are to be charted so that mankind, out upon the sea of life, will be guided safely into the harbor by those who heard the call of the good and righteous God pleading to use them.

From olden time there has come to us the story of the boy Samuel who heard in the night a voice that he thought was the voice of his uncle. But the man of God perceived that Something good and righteous had touched the boy and was asking for his help. He told the boy that when he heard the voice again he should reply, " Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." When we have said, " Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," we have learned the eternal meaning of prayer.

SEVEN

THE SACRAMENTAL PORTAL

FOR A moment, now, let us leave the area of argument and proof and enter into the presence of things that are unseen. That is what we do constantly in the profoundest moments of life when we desire to sense the realities by which man lives. We enter through a sacramental portal into the area of things which are understood though they are unseen; that are felt though they are untouchable. This is the use people have always made of the sacraments. It is well for us to find their values in a modern interpretation of religion and see if they can be of use to us in our religious experience.

I

Before we can discuss and think about the sacraments, we must make our definitions. Religious experience and belief run the whole gamut of variation in regard to them, for the Roman Catholic states that there are seven sacraments, and the Quaker states that there are none. These variations suggest the attitude that we should take toward the sacraments: that they are not ends in themselves, but means to an end. Both the Catholic and the Quaker secure vital religious experience in spite of the differences in their points of view. And though the Quaker refuses to accept any theological and ecclesiastical definition of the sacraments, may it not be that he does make use of sacraments in the essential meaning

of the term? But the main point is that the sacrament, to both Catholics and Protestants, is a means to an end, that end being the discovery of the presence and power of God.

The Catholic and the Protestant agree in defining a sacrament as the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. It is good to remember when we think of the sacraments that the most fiercely Protestant preacher of all times, John Calvin, had a very clear definition of them. In his *Institutes* Calvin defined a sacrament as " an external sign by which God seals on our consciences his promises of good will toward us, in order to sustain the weakness of our faith; and we in turn testify our love toward him."

There are, of course, some real differences between the Catholic and the Protestant conception of the sacraments. The Catholic position is that the sacraments themselves confer the power of grace on the human soul. Luther rejected this conception, saying that the sacraments are signs and testimonies of God's grace. He felt that God gives his spirit to us, and the sacraments are the signs of that gift. In this, Luther was taking the Jewish rather than the Catholic attitude toward such observances. For while the Hebrew religion does not have sacraments defined in the same terms as those of the Christian, the Jewish observances of the Passover are very definitely of this character — the sign and testimony of God's grace in leading the Jews out of bondage.

Of the two Protestant sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper, the first was a Jewish rite, used by John the Baptist before Jesus began his ministry; and the second was established by Jesus before any conception of the institution of Christianity was in the mind of man. Certainly John the Baptist could have used the words of Calvin in describing

baptism in the Jordan as " an external sign by which God seals his promise of good will to us, and we in turn testify our love toward him." The two Protestant sacraments, therefore, have their roots in Jewish forms of religious experience, and the Protestant and the Jew can be one in their understanding and observance of them.

There is another difference between the Catholic and the Protestant conceptions of the sacraments. The first we have noted: the Catholic believes that the sacraments themselves bestow grace, whereas the Protestant believes that they are signs of grace. The second difference is in their number. The Catholic holds that there are seven — baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, extreme unction, orders and matrimony. Luther dropped four of these and said there were only three — baptism, the Lord's supper and penance. It is interesting to note that Henry VIII protested against this act of Luther and insisted there were seven sacraments. For his stand he received from the church the title of " Defender of the Faith." Later, the church probably thought it had been a little hasty in bestowing such a title on this king, but the name remains to this day among the titles of the kings of England. The Reformation discarded penance, and the reformed faith in the Westminster Confession was left only two sacraments — baptism and the Lord's supper — these being the only two mentioned in the New Testament.

What is the religious idea behind the sacraments, Protestant, Catholic or Jewish? Though St. Thomas Aquinas was a Catholic, he has probably given us the clearest picture of the use of the sacrament as a portal to the presence of God. St. Thomas employed the analogy of the body, saying that the body needs definite things. It needs birth, growth, nutri-

tion, healing and guidance. So it is with the soul. Baptism is the new birth of the soul. Confirmation is the growth; it makes us strong. The eucharist is nutrition; it furnishes the food by which our souls are fed. Healing is received through penance, for by that the disease of sin is healed. Guidance is secured through orders, for through the ecclesiastical system we receive guidance for our living.

It can be readily seen that for some of these conceptions a Catholic theology is necessary, and so we realize why Protestantism has given up most of the old sacraments and centered its attention on two. The two basic necessities of the body are birth and nutrition. All the others are phases of these. It is here, however, that we can use the analogy of St. Thomas, for, as the body needs birth and nutrition, so does the soul. Baptism is the sign of the birth of the soul. The Lord's supper is the sign of the feeding of the soul. We sense this conception of baptism in the word picture used of the spirit of God descending like a dove upon Jesus after his baptism. We sense it in the Lord's supper in the words of our communion hymn:

> And be Thy feast to us the token
> That by Thy grace our souls are fed.

The sacraments, therefore, are signs of spiritual birth and of spiritual food. They constitute the portal through which we enter into the presence of God.

II

The first step toward spiritual birth is the understanding of God through our intuitions of him. After we have

finished with all our intellectual arguments for the existence of God, it undoubtedly remains true that no one ever reaches a full conception of God until he has approached him also through his intuitions and emotions. For most people the problem is not a lack of desire to believe in God. Most of us discover that we possess the desire. The problem is that in the modern world there are certain intellectual difficulties in the way. These must be cleared up. Whether we like it or not, more and more people are going to secure a more complete knowledge of both the scope and nature of the universe. Their new knowledge will create for them problems in the way of any belief in the existence of a personal God. Their questions are valid and necessary, and for the increasing number of educated young people no consciousness of God will be obtained until these intellectual questions are met. And for the purpose of meeting them, we must use the scientific method; we must make a laboratory test of the universe and of life that will yield us an ever clearer apprehension of truth.

But all religious experience tells us that there is a difference between an intellectual acknowledgment of the presence and nature of God in the universe, and an appreciative life which can perceive the presence of his spirit. It is necessary to make the scientific survey in order to clear away the intellectual doubt, but a mental acceptance of God alone is never finally satisfactory. When the intellectual questionings are satisfied, the real acknowledgment and perception of God must come through the intuition of him in the human heart.

Jesus said it was like being born again, and when Nicodemus asked him how that could be, he said it was like the wind blowing through the trees; we hear the sound of it,

but no man knows whence it comes. God is a spirit and that is the manner of the coming of his spirit. To become aware of the reality of that spirit constitutes for us a new birth. That will ever be the fundamental nature of religion, as it will ever be the essential difference between science and religion.

The question is never one of science *or* religion; we must think of it as one of science *and* religion. Religion takes life up where science must lay it down. We observe this fact in our everyday lives. Science hands a child to a father and a mother and says, "Here is a biological animal." But a mother and a father, though cherishing that body, in the love of their hearts discover the soul of their child, and all the mothers of mankind hold their children and "ponder these things in their hearts."

Our understanding of the nature of God follows the same observation that religion begins where science must stop. Science unfolds a universe which the mind of man acknowledges to have reason and design at its source. The soul of man opens to the experience of the spirit of God descending upon him in a moment of new birth, and for him the quest is over. His soul has found the presence of God in that sacrament, and it sings:

> The baptism of the heaven-descended Dove,
> My heart an altar, and Thy love the flame.

III

The sacramental portal can also open for us to the means by which we do something *for* God as well as receive something *from* him. It is true that religion embodies the gospel

of the mercies and gifts of God to us. Religion gives nourishment to our souls. But to the degree that religion has emphasized that one of its aspects to the exclusion of our duty to offer something to God, it has failed us. We understand perfectly that no life can grow strong when it constantly receives and never gives. The reception of nourishment is only half the story of life. The ability to give because we have been nourished is the other half.

Too long religion has allowed us to believe that the path between us and God has only one-way traffic, *from* God *to* us. We seek power and gifts from him. Our modern Protestantism is undoubtedly weak in not giving us a conception of God which asks something from us. The picture of God as an eternal Lady Bountiful does not do so much harm to God as it does to us. It is in the sacraments, therefore, that we can find an outlet for our desire to do something for God.

The book of worship of the King's Weigh House Church describes this for us. The service of the communion, it declares,

> sets forth something more besides the gift of spiritual food. We have to offer something to God. We use the bread and wine, but that should be a token that we offer something more. It should signify that we offer the fruits of earth and the human labor done on them, recognizing that the necessities of life come from him, and that they need to be sanctified and shared if they are to do us the good that God intended. But, deeper still, it signifies the offering of ourselves in union with the offering of Christ. Therefore there is an offering

made at every communion which can give God great satisfaction; for at the Lord's supper the church is brought into closer communion with Christ, our common humanity is united together by prayer, and the purpose of God moves forward to its redemptive consummation.*

If we start out to do things for God, we may find a much clearer understanding of him than our discussions give us. We may give to him in the form of adoration, thanksgiving, participation in worship, or the doing of his will in the extension of our sympathy and good will. But in any case our giving is the outreach of ourselves toward God, and in that outreach we begin to make his presence real. Then we *do* something, and we may begin such a conscious doing in the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Yes, it is obligation, and we should call it by that name, if God is to be real. Life is made real by obligation, and God remains unreal for most of us because we feel no obligation. The presence of God will become real to us in the measure that we enter the sacramental portal of doing something *for* God.

IV

We can also remember that it is through the sacramental portal that we find the power to achieve. In one of his essays Johnston-Ross wrote, "I must remember that my life is derived — I must remember from whence — I must behave accordingly." When we meet with the sacraments of life, we discover that our life is derived from some great source. When we participate in the communion service, something

* *The Devotional Companion* (London, Unwin Bros., Ltd.), p. 27.

within us keeps saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy," and in that presence we discover that this life of ours comes from a holy source. And that is what we need to discover about life. Much of life seems to be so cheap and worthless that it is no wonder that individual lives sometimes become absorbed in cheap and worthless things. One may be heedless and careless at many moments in life, but one cannot be heedless and careless when he stands, for instance, inside the Lincoln Memorial. Somehow, at that moment he remembers the great beauty and dignity of human life, and feels that he must act in harmony with that beauty and dignity. And, curiously enough, when he stands and looks into that face, and reads the words of the first inaugural and the Gettysburg addresses upon the wall, he has faith and confidence that there can be beauty and dignity in his own life.

That is the power of the sacrament. Through the sacrament we find the grace of God, and we then discover not only that we want to live with great imperatives, but that we are possessed of the power to do so. Every life which has achieved great spiritual power has at some time, or in some place, possibly without being aware of it, found that power by passing through some sacramental portal. The sacrament can be an awe-inspiring experience that thrills us with the majesty of human living, and charges us with life.

EIGHT

MONASTIC DEVOTION IN THE WORLD

THE EXPERIENCE of prayer, and the appreciation of the power inherent in the sacramental life, lead one to a re-examination of the desire of some men and women in all ages to dedicate themselves to serving God and their fellow men. Historically this desire has generally taken the form of surrendered lives congregated in monasteries. There has been a growing tendency among moderns to shrink from association with this type of life because they feel it to be an escape from reality, a denial of life's high prerogatives, and a lessening of the sense of the supreme responsibilities which are laid upon us all.

But one of today's most amazing phenomena is the suggestion of a great scientist that our times should develop a monasticism of their own. Many of us have read Dr. Alexis Carrel's book *Man, the Unknown* (Harper and Bros., 1935). One of the most important parts of the book is the last chapter, in which he pleads that men and women dedicate themselves to the saving of our civilization as the monks and nuns of the Middle Ages pledged themselves to saving theirs.

Dr. Carrel diagnoses our present circumstances with the skill of a physician. " While surrounded by comfort, beauty and mechanical marvels," he says, " man fails to realize that he is degenerating." Then he goes on to describe the realities

of our state of life. For a while, modern man thought himself secure in his mechanical triumphs, but the collapse of the economic system brought him face to face with reality, and many of us are beginning to doubt whether we can sustain ourselves under present conditions. Has not modern life decreased the intelligence and morality of the whole nation? Why do the amount of crime and the numbers of gangsters grow in spite of what we call progress? Why are there so many feeble-minded and insane among us? Why, when we know so much of what we ought to do, do we not attempt to do it? These are the questions which lead to the great query whether the world crisis does not grow out of individual and social problems that are more important than the economic ones. Dr. Carrel emphatically believes that it does.

But the remaking of the individual demands the transformation of modern life, and that cannot take place without a mental and material revolution. To achieve this revolution we must find some imperative to release the impulses required for the destruction of our present habits and the consequent creation of new modes of life.

Dr. Carrel then proceeds to describe how we need to master the knowledge of physiology, psychology and pathology in order to understand how we can remake man's body and mind and soul and thus enable him to live life worthily and with significance. Then here is his call. In about twenty-five years a student could make himself master of one of the multitudinous parts of these studies. If he would give himself to it he could effectively begin to direct life at the age of fifty. But these years would call for a complete dedication to this supreme task. Listen to Dr. Carrel's words:

> The individuals who dedicate themselves to this work will have to renounce the common modes of existence. They will not be able to play golf and bridge, or serve on committees. They must live like the monks of the great contemplative orders. In the course of the history of all great nations, many have sacrificed themselves for the salvation of the community. Sacrifice seems to be a necessary condition of progress. Why should not some individuals sacrifice themselves to acquire the science indispensable to the remaking of man? Men grow when inspired by a high purpose, when contemplating vast horizons. And there is no more beautiful and dangerous adventure than the renovation and the remaking of man.*

Those are the words of one of the greatest scientists of the twentieth century, but surely our minds instinctively turn, as we hear them, to some other words which we remember, words spoken by a Galilean nineteen centuries ago: " He that would come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." The noise and turmoil of twenty centuries of human existence have passed between the uttering of these two messages, and now the message which comes from one of the calmest, most brilliant and most useful men we have in our time is couched in the phrases of Jesus of Nazareth, and the modern scientist pleads with us to understand that we can be made new only through the lives of those who will deny themselves. The plea to us is for the revival of that monastic devotion which once saved the world.

*Pp. 285–86.

I

But what is this monastic devotion? Most of us almost instinctively shrink from the very words. We are sure we know what that devotion must be, and sure also that we want anything but that. We personify it as a monk, a man with a vacant, lugubrious face, dressed in a long and dirty mantle; an unworldly, unattractive sort of being inhabiting a stone fortress built upon the plan of a prison cell. Who would want to be such a monk, and who would want a return to such a monasticism?

Frankly, no one. It is true, of course, that there were such mendicant monks, and there were also some monasteries that would certainly not pass public inspection today. Yet they were but the fringes of monasticism, and it is unfortunately true that it is often easy to make the fringes of a movement appear as the heart of it in the popular conception. Think of the popular conception of a prohibitionist, or a Puritan — or the popular conception of a Republican, or a New Dealer, or a Socialist. None of these pictures is very alluring or flattering because they are in the main the pictures of the fringes of the movements. That mendicant monk does not depict the reality of monasticism any more than the bigoted witch-burner depicts the power and the glory of Puritanism. The monasticism of the Middle Ages was something that saved the world. Of that we ask, what is monastic devotion?

One of the clearest answers that has ever been given is the short essay on monasticism by Harnack. This is how that German philosopher described it:

> It was always monasticism that rescued the church when sinking, freed her when secularized, defended her

when attacked. It warmed hearts that were growing cold, restrained unruly spirits, won back the people when alienated from the church. In monasticism we have to do with a prime factor in church and civilization.*

The story of the power of monastic devotion is told best in the lives of two of the greatest of these dedicated souls, St. Francis and St. Benedict. From the form of the most loving and lovable of all monks, Francis of Assisi, shines a brilliant light undimmed by centuries. Primarily, he wished to restore the mode of life of the apostles, believing that this would be the remaking of man. Love gave him the widest horizon. His fancy did not, under the influence of harsh asceticism, transform the world into a wilderness or a desert. He wanted to make the desert of man's life bloom and flower. A new piety, attuned by the surrender of the soul to God, proceeded from Assisi and took possession of the church. The dedicated Franciscans served the people with eyes for their sufferings and with ears for their complaints, and they made religion a reality.

The other life was that of St. Benedict, the founder of the Benedictine order. Let us picture him in the words of another Protestant historian, Professor Hannah, of Oberlin:

> If we would see things in their true proportion, it must appear that Hannibal, or Alexander, or Napoleon left a smaller dent on the general story of mankind than St. Benedict and the Benedictine monasteries. By him a candle was lighted that was Europe's chief lantern for a thousand years, and which has never ceased to burn. Even if it be an exaggeration to say that the culture of the Middle Ages was what the Benedictines made it, no

* Adolf Harnack, *Monasticism* (Williams and Norgate, Oxford), p. 13.

> rational person will maintain that any other voice was as powerful as theirs. Not an institution which stood in the Middle Ages but received its inspiration from them; not a feature of importance in that virile civilization that would not have been vastly different but for their work. What Benedict essayed was to guide certain poor men who were in despair of life to the portals of the still land beyond. What he accomplished was to inspire and train the men who should rebuild into a splendid fabric the structure of a culture that was roofless and in ruin.*

In the light of words like these we can see more clearly the reason why men in our day turn again to that power in life which comes from such dedication of human personality. We know now why Dr. Carrel, a scientist of the twentieth century, must speak in the terms of those of the Middle Ages and before, and why he tells us plainly that the individuals who dedicate themselves to the remaking of man in our time will have to renounce the common modes of existence and live like the monks of the great contemplative orders. That scientist has discovered that it is not only through the power for good of dedicated lives that the miracle can be wrought, but that those who do so dedicate themselves are the only ones able to minister to that place where the world is most sick — the heart of man. The one power that can save and remake man is the dedicated life.

II

Here, then, is a call that the best men and women of the divine society of the church should hear, and hearing, an-

* J. C. Hannah, *Christian Monasticism* (The Macmillan Co., 1924), pp. 74, 75.

swer. It is not necessary for the church to move as an institution; it is necessary only for some groups to move forward into dedicated living. That is what makes such action so magnificent. One does not have to wait for all mankind to move with him. One, or a group, can kneel for such dedication, and then rise to serve in the company of a few. The sacrifice of self is not very difficult for one who burns with passion for a great adventure. Physical pain and hardship are easily supported if they are required for the success of a cherished enterprise. Even death may seem to present itself with a smile if it is associated with the beauty of sacrifice. "And there is no more beautiful and dangerous adventure than the remaking of modern man."

We can find here the great arena for heroic action into which some individuals and some groups within the church may enter to dedicate their lives with monastic devotion to remake the mind and soul and body of man. We have no way to measure the power that can be released in the world by a group of men and women who have vowed to live disciplined lives, and then proceeded actually to live such lives. Some monasticism was a retreat from the world and an attempt to do away with the world. That kind never changed the world. But the best of monasticism entered into the world and lived in it, believing that the world was real and that it could be transformed.

Can this monastic devotion do what Dr. Carrel thinks must be done? Consider what such devotion did in the Middle Ages. From the sixth to the thirteenth centuries the monasteries were the only schools, and they literally preserved education until the rise of the medieval universities in the thirteenth century. They were the sole historians of the period.

Theirs were the only libraries, and we possess the records of the deeds and thoughts of the past because of their manuscripts and their libraries. They saved the science of Roman agriculture, and were the agricultural experiment stations of the times. The monks first planted the vineyards of the Rhine. They developed the first iron furnaces of England. And by putting an emphasis upon the worth and dignity of labor, they gave it a new social significance.

Above all, they made charity and the service of man beautiful. Almost all that they did was done for the poor and for those in need. In an age when proud and arrogant men brought civilization to its doom, these consecrated lives kept the soul of the world alive through charity. There is one incident of this spirit which has dramatic interest. Far up on the Alpine passes the Romans had built their roads that travelers might pass from Italy to northern Europe. But in winter, snow would cover the roads and travelers would be lost. A man by the name of Bernard devoted himself to dwelling at the highest pass to rescue those who were lost in the storm. They called him St. Bernard. People never forgot his service, and long years afterward, when those friendly huge dogs were trained to rescue Alpine travelers, the only name that fitted them was the name he had borne who had dedicated his life years before.

Even at its best, however, the monastic life of the Middle Ages was apart from the world; it was something on the fringes of life. It was probably necessary then that it should be so. But today the need is for monastic devotion in a form that can exist *in* the world as part of it. We have discovered that life is a whole process, and the fact means that the body and the mind and the soul must all be whole if the whole of

life is to be remade. That is the kind of dedication of life Dr. Carrel is pleading for, and so the monastic ideal in our modern world will be found in the normal forms of life and will be an advance into the world, rather than a retreat from it. That was the nature of the monastic devotion of Jesus. He consecrated his life, denied himself, and took up his cross, but he did it as a member of human society, deep-rooted in all its life.

The new monasticism is a dedication of life which the men and women of the churches may make in the plain and ordinary ways of life. The probable future of the church — its great future — will be to inspire men and women to this dedication. There is not much need in the world today for a church which includes in its ranks a vast mass of people without any ideal or devotion or conception of what they are doing there.

What the world needs desperately is groups of people here and there who will dedicate themselves to nothing less than the remaking of man. They will deny themselves that which others take as a natural right; they will be willing to endure suffering from which others will shrink; they will refuse to be partisans of temporary moods and movements, and instead will attempt to survey the whole of life and to master some portion of truth; above all, they will dedicate their bodies, minds and souls to the high religion of the spirit. They will be not only dedicated clergymen, but dedicated physicians, economists, chemists and psychiatrists, to name only a few. The ranks of those who minister to man will be greatly augmented, and that increase will automatically enlarge the conception of the church.

Think of that kind of dedication as a meaning for indi-

vidual living and as a reason for a church! Just as truly as the day of the church as a mass movement is over, the day of the church as a group of consecrated lives, moving with devotion to a high adventure, has just begun. All the ancient evils are still draining the life stream of man and are leaving him helpless. Greed, bigotry, low horizons, narrow conceptions, cheap values and the hideous lust for money, all are damming his life. Moreover, man is allowing the wells of his spirit to run dry by his refusal to worship and reverence anything better than the mess he has made of living. Another dark age, a reign of ignorance, intolerance and brute force, can envelop us within another generation.

But the most intelligent of our leaders are echoing some ancient words which we thought we could forget. In his brilliant and disciplined work, Dr. Carrel has said, " Deny yourself, for there is no more beautiful adventure than the renovation and remaking of mankind."

Once more the Galilean is coming into his own. The power of the dedicated spirit he released in the world is moving the minds and hearts of the noblest of our time. They are seeing again, not only the dark horrors of man's deterioration, but also the glory and power of a company of men and women who have denied themselves, dedicating their lives with joy to that search for truth and high values which can redeem man and lead him to the highest meanings of human existence. This group will be the nucleus of the new church on earth, a church which will impart power to those who will be leaders in the remaking of man.

NINE

THE DIVINE SOCIETY OF THE CHURCH

THE CONCEPTION of the basis of the church sketched in the last chapter leads us to a reconsideration of the church's nature. It enters definitely into a study of religion, for the world has never known Christianity apart from the church. There never was in Christianity a period comparable to that period in Judaism when worship was conducted before the family's tent. When Christianity first emerged, it was as church groups scattered through Asia Minor, and ever since, Christianity and the church have been one in the popular mind. What, then, should be the present meaning of the church?

This question is made very real for us by the modern tendency in education to shift the emphasis from the institution to the individual. In public education today the formula is the "pupil-centered" school. All the attention and effort of the teacher are directed away from the school as an institution and concentrated on the child as an individual. There is a very definite trend toward the consideration of the needs and values of the individual in secular education, and we hear less and less of the school as an institution.

This is also true in those sciences which have to do with human behavior. Psychology has turned almost all of its interest to the individual and away from society. Psychiatry and psychoanalysis, twin developments of modern psychol-

ogy, are devoted almost wholly to the welfare of the individual. These branches of knowledge have profoundly affected sociology and social case work, and have aroused great popular interest. Rightly or wrongly, and the case cannot be argued here, the whole realm of those sciences which have to do with human living has turned away from social institutions to emphasize the individual human being.

This being true in these fields, many who would not have thought of asking it in another time are now brought to raise the question of the nature and function of the church. They reflect the present tendency to look with suspicion upon any institution, no matter how honorable its history or tradition, and to view with favor any effort to think of the individuals in human society. They want to know what such an organization as the church really is in its nature and program, and why its welfare and future as an institution should be considered by this generation. It is a fair request.

On the other hand, there are many people who are becoming fearful that humanity is facing a precarious future because the church as a continuing and functioning agency is losing the attention and allegiance of men and women. They are familiar with the history of the church, of its work and life, and they wonder if the time has not come to reassert the fundamental nature and state of the church as an institution to which individuals should give allegiance, frankly and wholeheartedly, so that it may survive. They believe it important that the church continue to function because they feel it offers the best guarantee of the survival of true individuality. This is a real and definite emphasis in religious thinking.

I

These two views of the church's future prevalent among sincere men and women today impel us to consider the history and nature of the church. It is important at the beginning of such a discussion to make two statements as to what the church is *not*. Because there is a tendency to believe that the church is both of these, it is good to clear the ground and get them out of our mental conceptions. Historically speaking, the church is not, and never can be, either of these two things.

The church is not an audience. At first glance it seems to be one. A group of people is assembled in a large hall or auditorium. From outward appearances there is no difference between that group of people and another group assembled to hear a symphony concert or to listen to a lecture. The congregation of the church looks to all outward appearances exactly like an audience at a concert or a lecture. Many people and ministers have taken it for granted that the two audiences are alike and have treated them as such. But there is one essential difference between an audience and a church congregation. An audience dissolves when the particular occasion is over, never again to be assembled of the same units, while a church group definitely plans to come together again and again in terms of the same organization and spirit. It is not that an audience cannot receive inspiration or education or help. It can. An audience may be stirred to the depth of its soul by the music of a symphony concert, but when the music ceases the audience dissolves, never to gather together again with unity. A church is more than a changing audience which comes together be-

cause of an only momentarily common interest — because of the beauty of a cathedral or the power of a sermon. It is always something more than even the largest audience which, in numbers, may continue Sunday after Sunday.

The church is not a club. Now it is true that just as the church has some of the attributes of an audience, it also has some of the attributes of a club. In a club there are sociability and fellowship, and there never could be a church in which members paid not the slightest attention to one another. The command to love one another has ever been the charter of the Christian church, and that has meant the development of sociability and of fellowship. The church always has had, and always must have, the sense of fellowship within its life. Men and women will continue, as of old, to make the deepest and richest friendships of life within the church; will find husbands and wives, and will seek joy in those social contacts which deepen and enrich life through all the years.

But it can never be conceived of primarily as a club for the creation and development of social intercourse. Even when the church was the center of agricultural life, and gathered together on Sunday the folk from all the neighboring farms for the only social occasion of the week, it was always for something greater than the social opportunity. The church has never been simply the grange or the city club. It is something supremely more.

II

What that " something more " is may be gleaned from a study of the Roman Catholic conception of the church. Protestants will not wholly agree with this conception, but

at this time when there is so much confusion in the Protestant mind concerning the nature of the church, and so many questions about it, it is necessary and good for us to look with understanding minds upon the Roman Catholic idea of the church. We can then compare this idea with the nature of the church as we find it in the New Testament, and as it has developed in history, in order to reach our final conclusions.

To the Roman Catholic, the church is the "Divine Society." It is a society not only of living men and women, but also of the souls who have passed on and constitute the Church Suffering and the Church Triumphant, not separated from but in intimate communion with the church in its earthly aspect, termed the Church Militant. Though it resembles other societies of human life, it differs from them because it is of supernatural origin and is eternal. This society was not ordained of man. It was ordained of God and established by him through his son, Jesus Christ, to be his representative in the world. The church thus established by the authority of Jesus and constituting, under his headship, his mystical body, is a highly complex organism, each part functioning in its own way, making its due contribution to the life of the whole.

As the society of those whom Christ has redeemed from the world, the church reaches out to the unregenerated people of the world and offers them redemption and participation in its life. If they accept, it communicates to them the means of grace. By these means of grace — the light of revealed truth, the sacraments, and the perpetual renewal of the sacrifice on Calvary in the mass — the church carries on its work of sanctifying its members, uniting their offering of them-

selves with the sacrifice of Christ as represented in the mass, and establishing the kingdom of God.

There are three other facts concerning the Catholic conception of the church which are necessary for us to comprehend if we are to understand what the Catholic means by the church.

The first is the necessity of union with the church. St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote: "Be not deceived, my brethren. If any man followeth one that createth schism he does not inherit the kingdom of God. If anyone walketh in strange doctrine, he hath no fellowship with the Passion." The church maintains that position today.

The second is the visibility of the church. It is not a secret organization but one which is conspicuous and public, forever visible, and to be recognized as the church of Christ in the world. Membership in the church is dependent upon the public profession of the one true faith, the acknowledgment of the authority of the church, and the participation in the communion.

The third is the acknowledgment of its infallibility in faith and morals. Because of so many counterclaims, it is good for us to know the exact words by which the Catholic church claims infallibility. The Vatican Council, in 1870, passed this decree:

> The Roman pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra* — that is, when in the exercise of his office as pastor and teacher of all Christians, he defines, by virtue of his supreme authority, a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the church — is, by reason of divine assistance, possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine

Redeemer wished his church to be endowed in defining doctrines of faith and morals.

There is no equivocation or doubt in this position. The Roman Catholic Church states that its head is infallible in these realms. Two important things must be remembered about this statement. The first is that the claim to infallibility is made only in the realms of faith and morals. The second is that the dogma of infallibility was not proclaimed until 1870, and constitutes, historically, a means of authentically defining what had grown to be an accepted belief, already held by a very large proportion of the membership of the church.

These characteristics appear to sum up the Catholic conception of the church as a clear, distinct and concrete institution founded and endowed by God, constituting the presence of the living Christ in the world. Our problem concerning that conception does not lie in the question of its inherent rightness or wrongness, about which there can be no conclusive and satisfying answer. What we can do is to determine how nearly it seems to us to approach that conception of the nature of the church which, we gather from the Gospels, was in the mind of Jesus. For that we shall have to consider what the New Testament tells us.

III

The word that can be translated " church " appears only twice in the Gospels, and both times in Matthew. It is impossible, therefore, for one to build a definition of the church upon what Jesus said about it, because, so far as we can tell, Jesus did not develop any definite plan for an

organized church. At least, there is no sign of any plan of organization in any of his recorded words. As far as we know he never left the Jewish synagogue. He constantly taught that men should obey the Jewish ecclesiastical leaders even though he advised them to live in a different manner and with a different spirit. There does not seem to have been any plan in the mind of Jesus for a new church which would supersede the Jewish synagogue.

But he most certainly developed and cultivated a group which he conceived of as being set apart from the world. There was a large group of at least seventy, and there was an inner group of twelve. By the time of his death the larger group had grown to probably several hundred who felt themselves more or less in union with him as his disciples. He constantly spoke of this group as being separatists, for he would say to them, " You will do this," or " You will do that," as though they understood that they were a special group and were set apart. It was to this group that he spoke intimately and gave definite instructions. We find most of these instructions in the ninth chapter of Mark, but there are some also in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. In these words we find the conception of Jesus as to what characteristics would distinguish the special group of his followers. In the absence of any other statements regarding the nature of the church, we must assume that they reveal the mind of Christ concerning the groups which would hereafter meet in his name.

He seemed to be interested especially in the spirit of the group and not in its administration. A man, who was undoubtedly one of the special group, came to him and asked him to make his brother divide their inheritance equally. Jesus asked the man, " Who made me a divider among

you?" He did not seem to be interested in civil or ecclesiastical authority, and so certainly did not place emphasis upon a system which would operate in the realm of authority.

He insisted constantly that service was to be the only title to leadership. "He that shall be greatest among you shall be your servant." The one who was the greatest servant should be considered as first in the fellowship.

The group was to be sensitive to very simple things, such as the ways of a small child. Those who were not as simple and guileless and trusting as little children would not be able to understand the nature of the kingdom of God on earth.

Members were to be found in the most unlikely places. Not only were such unlikely prospects as Zacchaeus and Mary Magdalene to be members, but also the man who cast out demons in Jesus' name but did not follow the disciples.

It was not to be an exclusive society. Anyone who gave a cup of water in Jesus' name would be considered as part of the fellowship.

There were not to be any distinctions or rankings. "You are not to be called rabbi, or leader."

The members were not to be tied too closely to earthly attachments. "Call no one your father, for God is your Father."

Above all, one was to give all that he had to belong to the group. There was to be no limitation on sacrifice, for one was to "take up his cross" and follow the Master in the fellowship. The cause was to demand one's all, and ask for nothing less than full dedication.

There seems to have been no form of administration given

to this group of which we have any record. Yet, undeniably, there must have been some sensing in the mind of Jesus of a beloved community of the faithful and the regenerated which would be his body in the world in a peculiar way. The words, " This is my body, broken for you," were spoken to a number of individuals who had separated themselves from the world to be with him, and were not spoken to be lost on the air.

Jesus took it for granted that the group would take some form and have some plan for meeting after his death, for he said, " As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this wine. . . ." There were to be meetings in remembrance of him, and if this simple passing of bread and wine across a wooden table developed through the years of man's experience until it came to take its place as a ritual upon an altar within a cathedral, the light which is sifted through the stained glass of the windows still falls on dedicated men and women who partake of a sacrament in memory of him. Somehow, we know not how, he seemed to believe that such would happen down through the years, and that the fellowship and the meetings would not be those of an audience or a club, but would be distinctly a society whose spirit was born of a sense of some divinity, and which had set itself apart from the world to remember him with dedicated living.

IV

Describe this as we will, there is no way in which to picture the church as only a human fellowship. If it be not a society with a sense of its own divinity at its heart, it has little meaning at all for us. Man is not moved to pass bread and wine and to kneel before an altar simply because of a

beautiful tradition. They are not just casual men and women who pause to take their places within the church and who kneel before an altar. They are men and women who have sensed some touch upon them which is not of this earth, and who feel a deliverance and a redemption. That is the touch of which Dr. Cadman spoke when he described the church, in that last great address before his death, as " the congregation of all souls reborn in Christ and gathered out of every nation and kindred, fused into one homogeneity, broadly and securely founded upon the teaching of her Head." It is through reflections of this kind, then, that we perceive the church as a divine society of souls made new by the presence of the mind and spirit of Jesus, and not merely a fellowship for ethical culture, or a society for the exaltation of man. The church is not something through us, but first of all is *to* us, and then through us.

The church, then, can be thought of as a divine society which exists within, and yet beyond, all temporary and changing social orders. It is something which is timeless through the time-sets of a particular culture or nationality or social system; it has existed through many cultures, hundreds of national entities and successive social systems. The only way in which the divine society can perish is for its disciples, or its enemies, to ally it with a culture, a nationality or social system which by its temporal nature is doomed to perish in time. But it becomes eternal and beyond all time when the presence of the divine upon the altar of a humble and contrite heart is made the fire upon that altar which men see with their eyes.

The issue, therefore, is not one of the rightness or wrongness of the position of the Roman Catholic Church, or of

that of the many differing forms of Protestantism. It was probably inevitable that the " Holy Catholic Church " should have evolved out of the Christian experience of the first centuries after Jesus on through the Middle Ages. It, alone, undoubtedly preserved what little we possess of the human application of the mind and spirit of Jesus, and it certainly was the sole presentation of him to the world for all those centuries. Because the doctrines of the Roman Church contain so much that is true, it is to be regretted that it lays claim to so much that many sincere, dedicated men and women cannot accept and feel a hindrance to what might be found essential truth. It has held fast to much that we want for our faith — the sense of the church's being of such divine origin that we cherish and gladly use the name, the " Divine Society "; the claim of the supremacy of the spiritual over the secular; the demand for the discipline in personal spiritual living; and the gift of dramatizing, through beautiful forms of liturgy and architecture, the presence of the eternal God, together with the significance of the cross. We devoutly wish it had stopped there; that it had not created for itself, as definer of truth, the doctrine of infallibility; that it would give heed to the suggestion of Jesus that his followers should render unto Caesar the things that belong to the temporal world, and unto God the things that belong to him.

Our opportunity, then, is to claim and rejoice in this heritage which can be of such great use to us, while we state that the mission and program of the church shall not be claims which cannot be substantiated, but shall be the ways which Jesus commended to those inner groups of people to whom he spoke so intimately. Catholic or Protestant, we have never taken these ways seriously. Forgetting them, we

have always gone on to build the kind of church our temporal minds and our imperial spirits have led us to desire. Our task now is to give ourselves to the contemplation of the imperatives of Jesus for the church, and to the attempt to practice them. That is the only basis for our claim to be the "Divine Society," and it would make our claim a valid one in the eyes of the world.

No longer can we go ahead on the assumption that something will happen simply because we have an institution — to which we give attention only in the desperate moments of life. It is the teaching of history that nothing will happen through the institutions of man until men and women have gained an understanding regarding the nature and function of those institutions. If Christians are to be powerful and purposeful, they will need to hammer out on the anvil of human living definite answers to such questions as these: Is the church just an audience gathered for a special meeting for a hundred different reasons, or is it a divine society of purposeful souls who belong to a kingdom not of this world? Are the sacraments merely symbols of historical events, or are they the outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace? Is the part of the church service which precedes the sermon merely the opening exercises of a lecture, or is it a time for worship of the majesty and glory of the eternal God and of vivid communion with him? Is the church an ethical culture society which gives us moral and social precepts, or has it the power to make men and women desire the water of life which, if a man drink, he will not thirst again?

Until Christians affirm definitely in their daily lives that it is the latter half of each of these questions which is true, the

church will remain weak and helpless. But when they do make this affirmation, and proclaim it in their lives, they will enter into an experience in which they will discover that the church is the power of God to change men and women and lead them to the mastery of life, because they have discovered that though its membership be human, its essence is divine.

TEN

CHRISTIANITY IN THE SYMPHONY OF FAITHS

No CHURCH ever existed without attempting to project its life beyond its temporal borders, and so the question we face is this: Shall Christianity attempt to express itself to other peoples, and if so how shall it do so? It is necessary that any endeavor to define the province of Christianity include the question of what should be the relation of one religion to another and, specifically, what should be the relationship and attitude of Christianity to other religions.

The old answer was specific, definite and immediate. Adults today remember what the definition of missions was in our childhood, and perhaps even in the childhood of our fathers. It said that God had made man good, but through the sin of Adam and Eve man had fallen and was in a state of sin. Their transgression had caused the anger of the righteous God who decreed punishment for that sin; but even in his anger, God felt sorrow for sin-burdened humanity and willingness to redeem it. Someone, however, must pay the penalty and receive punishment for that sin, and so God sent his only begotten son, the second person of the Trinity, to be born of a virgin and to take on the form of man. The son of God was then crucified on a cross. His blood was shed. By this shedding of his blood and by this death, Christ paid the debt of the sin of man; and all who would repent and accept this atonement for themselves would be washed

clean of their sins and exempted from the penalty which God demanded. After this sacrifice Christ went back to heaven and took his place again on the throne with God. Those who accepted this atonement would be saved, but those who rejected it would be damned.

This belief, of course, demanded immediate action. Obviously, there were millions of men and women in the world who were sinners, but who had never heard that Christ had died for them, and so did not know that God had given them an opportunity to escape eternal damnation. They must be told. The message must be given to them in haste, for one day's delay would be fatal to hundreds of thousands. But the message could not be given without messengers, and so the call went forth for men and women who would go out to foreign lands to bear the message and to evangelize the heathen. The people in those lands were considered heathen in their blindness. Most of us remember the missionary maps which were placed upon the walls of the churches. The Christian countries like America and some of the European lands were in white on these maps, but the rest of the countries of the world were all in black, for the light had not dawned upon them because they had not been evangelized.

It took some time after the Reformation to arouse the Protestant churches to the need of evangelism, and at first only a few missionaries went out. But soon the church caught fire with the sense of urgency, and it was not long before thousands of missionaries had gone to all of Africa and Asia to save the heathen by the message of the blood of Christ. There was nothing equivocal or hesitant about this action. It was positive, direct, challenging, and it was charged with the emotional fervor of immediacy.

For a great number of people the old conception of the task of missions has lost its validity. That is not to say that the majority of Christians have departed from this old theology, for they have not. But there are increasing numbers of people who have discovered the inadequacy of the old belief to meet reality, and the futility of this approach of Christianity to other faiths. Their number and influence are growing to such an extent that it is going to be increasingly difficult for the younger generation coming out of our schools and colleges to accept any such interpretation.

There are certain definite factors which have destroyed for people in the liberal churches the old interpretation of Christ's appearance on earth and the kind of missionary approach it engendered.

I

There was, first of all, the discovery of the validity of the religious experience of other people. Men found that people in the East were not ignorant pagans living in blindness, but were folk who possessed traditions of religious experience antedating in some cases even that of the Hebrews, and who had held for centuries to forms of religion that were essentially spiritual in nature. If we compared the worst in those religions with the best in ours, which has been so common a practice, they were at a terrible disadvantage; but the situation would be reversed if we compared the best in the religions of the East with the worst in ours. Many intelligent men and women began to search for the best in other religions, and they found there evidences of spiritual experience which were authentic, valid, and based on real religious objectives. The validity of religious experience in other religions has been authenticated.

It was then discovered that other faiths possessed the same religious values as ours — God, morality, mysticism and spiritual perceptions. These were the faiths of people who for centuries had been following the quest of the mind and heart, "O that I knew where I might find Him." We possess some of the answers.

Here is the word of Hinduism:

He is the God in every way supreme.
He, the Lord of Prayer, encompasseth all.
O God, Thou hast made the sun, eternal star,
To mount the sky, bestowing light on living men.
Thou, God, art the people's light —
Best, dearest, seated in Thy shrine.

Here is Taoism:

How pure and still is the Supreme Being!
How deep and unfathomable,
As if the Honored Ancestor of all things!
Knowing the Eternal means enlightenment,
Not knowing the Eternal, causes passions to arise.

We find this in Sikhism:

True, true, true, is the Lord God,
Excellent, excellent is Thy form,
Pure, pure is Thy word,
Holy, holy is Thy name.*

These references could be multiplied without end, as students of religion well know, for we have discovered that all

* These quotations are from Robert E. Hume, *The Treasure House of Living Religions* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), pp. 3, 4.

of these faiths possess religious values founded on sincerity and truth.

Beyond the first two considerations, however, is the fact that we now understand something of the psychology of religious origins — that any religion grows out of the culture, customs and intuitions of a people, and is therefore indigenous to them. We understand this most clearly in relation to Judaism and Christianity. The religious ideas and sanctions of the Hebrews grew out of the life of the people. These people were first a nomad folk wandering for two generations. They then became a conquering horde, and their conceptions of God and religion were comparable to those of the Goths and the Vandals. Then a change to a settled community took place, followed by the exile into captivity; and we need only to read the religious literature to place it readily in its historical setting.

So it has been with Christianity. The early Christian experience passed into the control of the Roman empire, and when it did so its whole nature was changed. It then moved north, and the customs and thought of the peoples of northern Europe began to make over the Christianity which came to them. And we well know what has happened to it in these modern times.*

So it is with all religions. They do not grow out of the air, but out of the very life of the people; and they are psychologically part of the life of the people. Some forms of religion seem strange to us, just as some forms of life seem strange; but their religion is perfectly understood and appreciated by the people whose life it expresses.

The knowledge that a religion is indigenous to the cul-

* See *The Making of the Christian Mind* by G. G. Atkins.

ture that gives it birth has brought us to the realization of the disaster which so often occurs when people are uprooted from their own deep experiences of life without an adequate implanting of new forms. One of the saddest experiences of life occurs when, in the political, social or religious realm, old understandings are ruthlessly uprooted before new understandings have been made available or given the chance to replace them. That was what happened in the French Revolution. The attempt was made to destroy entirely, by a violent eruption, every ancient sanction of political life, of morality and of religion without any appreciation of how deep the roots of values and sanctions are implanted. Within seven years a dictator ruled France, and in twenty-five years the monarchy was back. Life does not grow and live wholly upon the surface of the earth. The mind and the heart send out deep roots which draw up the powers of life, and these can be changed or redirected only when that which might replace them has grown deeper and stronger. We know now the disaster of tearing up the psychological roots of any people's religion.

Our ideas have been changed most of all by the realization of the resentment which is born in most people when an attempt is made to influence them by propaganda and compulsion which seek to destroy values that are meaningful and precious. May I illustrate with a personal anecdote? One of my friends came in to see me unexpectedly. He rushed up to me with enthusiasm and excitement and said: " I'm so happy I don't know what to do. I have just come from an Oxford group house party, and I have a new experience of religion which is joy and happiness. Now I am entirely happy." Then he took my hand and said: " I want you to be

happy. I want you to get this message so that you, too, will have joy and happiness."

"But," I said, "I cannot imagine being happier than I am. I admit I am weighed down by the burdens and problems of the world today, but no one could have more personal joy than I have."

"No," he insisted, "you aren't really happy and released because you do not know the method of finding God and happiness through this plan of surrender to God, of sharing one's experiences, of absolutely following the guidance that God wants to give you daily. Oh," he said, "I want you to be happy; won't you join us and find this happiness, and so leave the old, dead life behind?"

That must be the experience through which a sincere, earnest, religious but non-Christian man must go when he is confronted by a Christian evangelist who wants to save his soul without regard to all the dear and precious values which make life good and of great worth for him. Inevitably resentment is engendered, not against the person, but against the attitude which believes that joy and goodness and a belief in life's meaning can come only through the machinery and devices which some group has formulated. The resentment has grown in this generation until it has made itself felt all over the world, until now two countries, Turkey and China, have officially banned any attempt to teach an alien religion within their borders. This resentment, with the other factors we have mentioned, has destroyed the old conception that Christianity must, and can, go out to destroy other religions and save the world by its particular formulas and theology of the atonement of the blood of Jesus.

II

The change which has come about because of these factors and because of our modern knowledge does not mean, as many have begun to think, that there is therefore no possibility of any friendly relation of one religion to another, and that each religion should become isolationist. The latter condition, of course, is impossible. Religion is a spirit, and the spirit of man is like the breath of the wind; it bloweth where it listeth. The change which has come about is a change of approach. Whereas the approach formerly was that of supplanting error with the truth which one religion alone was held to possess, we now perceive that our attitude must be that of offering to share an experience which has proved itself to be of value and worth. The question which is asked of a religion today is not, "Have you the eternal and revealed truth?" It is rather, "Do you possess anything which we have not yet found, and which you have proved to be of supreme value to all mankind?" That is the query which the untrammeled and unfettered minds and souls in all religions are asking of one another, and they are asking it with an earnestness which has never been surpassed. No free mind is content with what it has. It knows it must seek more, and it seeks earnestly.

Most of the living religions are able to answer affirmatively. The Buddhist can point to a distracted, mad, feverish world, rushing about with fury and speed but with no goal in sight, and speak of how the soul may grow calm and reposed through losing itself in the Infinite. Every one of us knows how mankind needs to share in a certain measure of that spirit today. The religions of China possess an understand-

ing of the value of reverence for the ancient experiences of life and of the recognition of a spiritual heritage. Judaism offers the sense of the majesty and glory of God, and the appreciation that the will of God must be the foundation of all living.

Has Christianity anything of supreme value for mankind?

III

Yes, it has. It has the spirit and mind of Jesus, and his attitude toward God and man. This is the sole possession of Christianity which is unique; and it is a heritage, of course, from Judaism. As Judaism has consistently refused to use it and prove it and proclaim it as its own, however, it is now the Christian possession. And yet, in its truest sense, this is not a possession of Christianity. It is that gift of life which Christianity has had the bravery and the courage to try to live and prove. How haltingly, stumblingly and sometimes blindly it has made this adventure all of us know; but its failures and defeats have been due mostly to its pathetically inadequate conception of Jesus as a God who was playing a part on earth, rather than as a son of God on earth in whose mind and heart burned the soul of God. Even with the handicap of that misconception, Christianity has presented the mind and spirit of Jesus to the world, and many Christians have so endeavored to live that way that they have proved its value and its worth.

And now, released from the bondage of ancient conceptions, the mind and spirit which were in Jesus are presented to mankind, made manifest in the lives of men and women. His spirit has transformed and made people useful and triumphant. By his mind and spirit we mean the impress of

his personality and his outlook upon human life, his attitude toward his fellow men, and his willingness to believe that greater love hath no man than this, that he will lay down his life for his friends. By his attitude toward God we mean his simple, complete, confident faith that the eternal Spirit knows about us and has concern for us and can be trusted with the eternal issues of life. That is the spirit of Jesus, the glorious possession of Christianity.

How shall that possession be offered to the world? Only by the method that Jesus suggested, by so living the spirit of Christ that by its fruits it will be known. Let the words of the laymen's missionary report describe the method: "To seek with the people of other lands a true knowledge and love of God, expressing in life and word what we have learned through Jesus Christ, and endeavoring to give effect to his spirit in the life of the world." *

We must be aware of the greatest fact of the modern age, that more than ever before in the world's history men and women would like to learn about the mind and spirit of Jesus of Nazareth, and to see through the life of a Christian what it means to live in that spirit. Aware of this fact and of its implications, we shall plan to have as many people who will, and who have proved themselves able to do so, go out through all the lands not to proselyte, not to attempt to make anyone call himself a Christian, not to found any church by outward compulsion; but just to live as simple, normal individuals or families, naturally and sincerely endeavoring to be helpful and useful in the way and spirit of Jesus. Think of the spiritual power of a man and a woman living with aggressive good will in a foreign community, reverent of its religion and of

* *Re-thinking Missions* (Harper and Bros., 1932), p. 59.

its traditions! Think of the questions that kind of life would raise! "Why do they live that way?" "What is their philosophy of life?" "Where is the source of their inspiration?" "Do you think that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they follow, has any message for us?" A new spirit of living would be loosed in that community, and a spirit like that could transform the world.

This was the method Jesus used. He shared his conception of religion by first of all going about doing good. He spent most of his time in places where there was human need. It is important to remember that he never used the method of telling a man what to believe, but began by asking him whether he was interested in finding out the resources of life. He would ask if men and women sought the water of life as much as they sought the water from the well. Then, with their affirmative answer, he could talk of such resources as he knew. He also sought always to turn men's attention to the old expressions of eternal truth, constantly asking them if they remembered what Moses or Isaiah or Jeremiah said concerning certain problems. He sensed the truth that the light of the face of God had broken upon the upturned faces of seeking and questing men in all generations, and that men could build upon their insights. And finally he took the furthest step. He proved that a man may willingly lay down his life for his friend. That was the power which made men say, "Truly this man was a son of God!"

We can make an unreserved plea, then, that we rethink our Christianity until we come to the place that Jesus suggested as the approach to men and women from the East and from the West. To make this approach is not to admit that Christianity has nothing to offer the world and that it may

therefore lose itself in syncretism with other religions. Christianity holds the great possession of life, the mind and spirit of Jesus; but this cannot be the possession of the institution of Christianity alone, but of all people who are willing to accept the kind of life it demands and offers guidance to. It has been the privilege of Christianity to keep that name, and a semblance of that spirit, alive in the world. It is now its privilege to share it with the world, forgetting itself.

We can suggest no method of our own device for this sharing. We can only use the method that Jesus used. He presented his insight as a way of life made manifest in personal living in the midst of those who could accept it not because they must, but because they may. Then he willingly lived that way.

There are those who have followed after him in living that way in the world. For them, the way has sometimes led up a lonely road to a hill on which was set another of the crosses of the world, while for others it has been lived out courageously in long and beautiful usefulness. Whichever has been their lot, when they have lived after the mind and spirit of Jesus in power and in truth, other men and women have stood before their lives as they stood before his and have said, " Truly, they were children of God."

To live like that is the privilege of a Christian today.

ELEVEN

THE COMPOSURE OF ONE'S SOUL

NOW THAT we have made all our research and appraisal of what religion is, and have come to an affirmative answer concerning its proposals and intuitions, there remains one question for which we must find an answer. We need to know if, in all the agitation and turmoil of life as we have to meet it, there is something through which we may achieve composure of soul. We would not be as foolish sailors who ask that the storm be stilled for their benefit. We would have power willingly to face the storm because we have peace at heart concerning the structure of the vessel and the surety that it can outride any blast.

Jesus of Nazareth has an answer for that question. It is found in his words, " My peace I give unto you."

These words are meaningless unless we see them against their background. They may be either tremendous or utterly innocuous according to the situation in which they were uttered. But look for a moment at the conditions of life out of which they were spoken.

It was a period of disorder. We need to go beyond the time which is so familiar to us from the New Testament story to find the real nature of the unrest and ferment of Jesus' time. It is to be regretted that that stirring episode of Jewish history, the revolt of the Maccabees, does not appear in the Bible, for it is the whole foundation of the situation at the

time of Jesus. There is a period between the end of the Old Testament and the opening chapters of the New Testament concerning which the Bible is silent. But it was no silent time in Jewish history.

After the death of Alexander the Great, the little state of Judah, one of the states which had resulted from the divisions of the Greek and Persian empires, was handed over to Syria. Its ruler was Antiochus Epiphanes, an unscrupulous man crazed with a lust for power. He tried to strengthen his kingdom by forcing the different peoples to unite under the Greek religion. He sent to Jerusalem an army which massacred the people on the Sabbath day when they were not allowed to defend themselves, and also defiled copies of the law. An old priest who refused to submit fled to the hills with his five sons. After he died, his son, Judas Maccabeus, took up the leadership and, in terrific battles, won for the Jews their national freedom.

But the freedom was short-lived, for the fortunes of the new and rising empire of Rome engulfed the Jews again. Once more they were slaves. Yet the memory of that great era of the Maccabean revolt was alive in their minds and hearts, and smoldered beneath the surface. The world of that age was aflame with the battle between those who lusted for power and those who were persecuted, and no man knew upon what fresh terror the next day's sun would set. It was in the midst of times like these that Jesus said, "My peace I give unto you."

Yet one must also be aware of the background of personal affairs out of which these words were spoken. His own figure of speech best indicates the state of religion into which Jesus was born when he said that old wineskins could not

hold new wine. The conditions of life which the people faced demanded such new conceptions and created such new issues that the old forms simply could not contain them. Yet the power was still in the hands of the rulers of the ecclesiastical system who jealously guarded the old forms and the old rights. The moment of inevitable conflict between the ancient shibboleths and the new experience had arrived, and the mind and spirit of Jesus brought it to a climax. The struggle had begun. One or the other was to win. Jesus was to be the central figure in that conflict during his life.

He began to know the reality of its cost. He was subjected to constant antagonism and questioning. He was misunderstood and his motives were derided. He faced an inner conflict — whether he would listen to those who importuned him to take a quick and decisive course of action and become a second Judas Maccabeus, or go his own way. His enemies gave a clear indication of their power when they put into prison his best friend, John the Baptist, and later beheaded him.

Then, slowly but surely, the shadow of a cross began to fall across his path, and the road of his mission was only to bring that shadow into grim and awful reality. And, finally, there was the loneliness of a broken heart as he looked down over the ancient city of his people, and said, " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee unto me as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, but ye would not." Conflict, frustration, loneliness and death!

He was the one who turned to his friends and said, " My peace I give unto you." That is the peace which granted him the composure of soul that we would like to discover.

Let us see how he found it.

I

He tried to get people interested in the values and not in the goods of life.

Go to any group of men and women and ask them what they want most from God. The majority will answer that they want to make sure of their income, their health, their religious beliefs and the future life. Every one of those desires is good and normal, and certainty about them must be secured in some way. But the startling fact is that Jesus never gave the slightest hint that we could expect God to give us assurance about any of them. They were all to be by-products of something else.

A short while ago a woman suffered a tragic loss, a loss which was tragic for the world as well as for her. She kept repeating one question over and over again: " Why did not God spare me this? " It was the natural cry of those who have thought that God must surely give us the realization of our desires. Instead of this attitude, we need to remember that we find our certainties by our loyalty to the high and lasting values of life.

Jesus, therefore, tried to show us that there can be no composure of soul in the face of life until we put our emphasis upon life's values and not upon its goods. If we depend completely for our composure upon certainty of income, or health, or creeds, or our idea of life after death, we can never be safe, for such matters are at the mercy of life's changing circumstances. If Jesus had turned the Romans out, had re-established a Jewish kingdom, and had restored the Jewish system of temple religion as the center of the culture, men

and women of his time would have said that he had saved Israel. True, he would have saved Israel from the Romans, but would that have guaranteed salvation from any other nation or people, or from its own sins?

He tried to make men see that without emphasis upon the real values of human living everything is uncertain, and that certainty comes not from health or wealth or creed, but only from the following of those ways of life which disease or poverty or creeds or even imprisonment cannot destroy. Jesus insisted that the meaning of life, the spirit of life that saves us, is found within ourselves, in our inner discipline and spiritual perceptions. We attain composure of soul not by asking that the externals which we desire shall not perish, but by discovering in our inmost souls the real values of life and humbly rejoicing in them. Then ill health and financial loss may come, our particular system of religious doctrine may break down, the shadow of a cross may fall athwart our lives, but we shall still have strength and peace because we still believe in the values of truth, goodness and love.

II

A second factor in the development of the composure of our souls is faith in something great and good beyond ourselves, a greatness and a goodness to which, mysteriously, we may relate our little lives. As Whittier suggested:

Yet in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed stake my spirit clings,
I know that God is good.

Faith in that one fixed stake that God is good is the fundamental basis of the peace in life which Jesus tried to emphasize. So often we take the attitude that peace in life is that state of being from which all turbulence, anxiety or trouble has been removed, and many expressions of religion have embodied that idea. Such a state, however, demands removal from life, and in making it his ideal the Buddhist is most logical in his contention that there should be a suspension of the reality of living. But when the sky is dark and the stars have disappeared, the sensible captain of a ship does not let his boat drift. He sets his course by the North Magnetic Pole, something which he cannot see or feel, but which is the fixed stake to which his mind clings, from which he obtains guidance and direction.

In his book, *The Return to Religion,* Dr. Link, the psychologist, tells of a man who had just been released from prison after serving a sentence of twenty years for having killed a man in a moment of passion. It was the one bad act of his life. He had been an engineer, and now he had to face the future knowing that he could not go back to his profession and that life, at its best, would be a continual torment of adjustment. He wanted to know if he was mentally still firmly enough balanced to face life, but the psychologist told him that the only hope he had was to secure some great faith in the ultimate rightness of God and life which would carry him through all the bitter experiences he would have to meet. That faith would not change those experiences. It would, however, be his only hope of overcoming them and keeping peace in his heart.

Consider how this principle acts in the moral field, enabling us to find peace and composure through adherence to

ultimate rightness even in the midst of moral perplexity. Men and women find power to guide their lives through maze and confusion because their loyalty to a final standard of right has given them peace of heart.

At the observatory at Greenwich, just outside of London, is the instrument by which the time schedule of the world is regulated. A clock is on time in Washington or in Tokyo because of its relation to that time schedule at Greenwich. We find agreement about the time of our clocks because we know that the time, say, in Washington, is five hours later than that in London, and we do not have to guess whether it should be four or six.

Gaius Glenn Atkins has pointed out to us how, in the midst of deep agitation, we may bring to life a manifestation of something great and splendid which our faults and follies and misfortunes cannot abolish or destroy. He tells us that a year after the war closed Viscount Grey spoke at Harvard University upon what the out-of-doors can do for us. He said:

> A keen sense of the beauty of the world and a love of it have been a support during these years of sorrow just ended. Every year as spring came back, unfailing and unfaltering, I felt the great power of nature was like a great sanctuary into which we could go and find refuge for a time even from the greatest troubles of the world. There was a manifestation of something great and splendid.

Then he added that " these are authentic tidings of visible things, a central peace existing at the heart of endless agita-

tion." Those are the tidings we seek, a central peace existing, not merely in a nirvana of the soul in some state of lifeless suspension, but where all of us find ourselves, at the heart of endless agitation.

This is the secret of the poise and peace of the soul of Jesus: he was sure of the timeless truth and inherent righteousness of that fixed point which is God. More than this, supremely his spirit reached out to God's spirit with love and understanding, and he felt God's spirit dwelling in him. Thus continually, in the midst of all the agitation of his life, he manifested to others the good will, the compelling love, which he drew from his relationship to God. In the garden of Gethsemane, when he knew that holding to his faith would mean yielding up his life, he said, " Not my will, but Thine be done." The fixed point of devotion was there and his soul was composed and sure.

III

Jesus showed that great peace which comes from complete giving of one's life for others, and the power of redemption thus released.

His friends wanted him to be the savior of Israel, but when they saw the cross stark against the sky they believed that the moment of final doom had come. Yet they must have heard him speak of a grain of wheat falling into the ground. They must have known by heart those words of Isaiah, " Behold the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." They were no duller of mind than those who came after them who have never been able to believe that one can save mankind by being willing to suffer.

We do not know why this is so, but we do know that Lowell was right when he wrote of

Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne;
But that scaffold sways the future. . . .

That was the power of redemption Jesus had released. Out of all Israel he had gathered just a few who would bear the stripes, who would be willing to suffer all the fury of the world's evil, knowing that if evil vented itself upon them it would bruise and kill them, but would wear itself out in the doing of it, and its seeming triumph would mark its defeat.

There Jesus was, bruised and torn upon a cross, yet evil has never been able to defeat his spirit. He has defeated evil, not by his words but by his stripes.

Of the first who followed Jesus to death it was said, when he was on trial for his life, that " all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."

Every one of us realizes that it is the individual who is dedicated to an unselfish use of his life who is the happy and contented man, no matter what the externals of his life may be. Somehow, nothing can harm or dismay or frighten him.

President Woolley, of Mount Holyoke College, is such a one. She stood at the forefront in all the struggles for human freedom and international understanding in her generation. Amid defeat, turmoil and agitation she maintained a serene and confident spirit because of her faith in the ulti-

mate goodness of the ways of God. Of her, Dean Robert Russell Wicks said, at the baccalaureate service which marked her retirement from the college: " She has infused a whole generation of women with a glorious sense of the beauty and usefulness of life through the touch of her amazing personality upon them."

Such is the task that religion can perform for us. Religion does not guarantee us the fruition of all our desires nor freedom from suffering; it does guarantee us the strength to bear loss and suffering. Religion does not expect us to be free from sin or mistakes; it does promise forgiveness of sin. Religion does not give bond that we can re-form people or the world; but it does expect us to continue to make the best efforts we can on behalf of others and of the world. That is how religion provides us with its redeeming powers, speaking to us of values instead of worldly certainties; of the inner life; of the goodness of God; of the endless power of those who are willing to suffer that stupidity and greed and evil may be overcome.

Life in these days will continue to be troubled and disturbed for most of us. It will be hard to discover the eternal stars through the constant shifting of clouds of uncertainty and doubt across the skies. The shouts of clashing opinions and the blatant cries of selfish groups will sound and resound in our ears. We shall be sick at heart over so much defeat of the good and so much success of evil. Stupidity and narrowness instead of brotherhood and intelligence may control the world for a while, darkness may descend and the veil of the temple may be rent in twain.

But those who cling to the " one fixed stake that God is good," and are willing to give themselves to that kind of

goodness, will find composure of soul. That is the peace of Jesus.

That is the religion which gave Cardinal Newman the sense of peace expressed in his immortal prayer:

> May He support us all the day long till the shadows lengthen, the evening comes, the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in His mercy may He give us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last.

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